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DRAGONS

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ON THE COVER

In honor of both the Chinese Year of the Dragon and the twenty-fourth anniversary of DRAGON *Magazine*, Brom created this month's cover image. The powerful gold dragon poised against a fiery red sky suggests the Chinese belief that the dragon combines the elements of fire and water, those elements necessary in forging the steel necessary to slay the dragon. Such mythic imagery effectively evokes this dynamic cycle in both game and reality. —*Johnny Wilson*

The Wyrm's Turn™

Year of the Dragon

What's the most common boast among D&D® players? It doesn't have to do with whose character has slain the most deities or gathered the most intelligent swords. It doesn't even have to do with who has survived a return to the Tomb of Horrors or defeated Raistlin Majere in a spell-duel. It's all about who's been playing the longest.

Lots of players have been at this game longer than I, so my own little boast is that I was born under the same Chinese zodiacal sign as the magazine—appropriately enough, the Year of the Dragon. Since that sign has come around again, twenty-four years since the first issue of *DRAGON Magazine*, I've been thinking a lot about the generations of gamers that have kept the D&D game fresh.

"I've been playing the D&D game since the three little white rulebooks," begin way too many "Forum" letters—so many, in fact, that it's the line we're most likely to cut for space. At conventions, you don't have to eavesdrop long before the one-upsmanship breaks out as players introduce themselves. Sometimes, somebody slips and claims he's been playing since the release of a book published *before* his birth.

How long have you been playing D&D?

That's my favorite part, because it's the most piercing example of just how highly gamers regard veterans.

Why so much bravado based on how long we've been playing a game? I think it has something to do with the game mechanics. Who's the toughest character in the room? Why, it's the one with the most experience. Likewise, all must bow before the player with the greatest expertise, the longest tenure.

True veterans know that how long you've been playing doesn't mean you're a better player. Some of the best players are those who've just discovered the game, and some of them are also the youngest. While many of us gaming on the late, lamented Genie network were D&D veterans of ten or fifteen years, there were notable exceptions. One of my favorite players was a 60-year-old fellow who'd discovered the game only a few months before running the most memorable characters in our games. Another was a 13-year old kid who boasted of playing since the "first printing" of the *Player's Handbook*. Of course, he was referring to the 2nd Edition rules…

Considering all of the novices who have invigorated groups of jaded oldtimers, the most exciting prospects this year are those people who have *never* played. With the new D&D game only two months away, we hoary veterans should brace ourselves for hordes of new gamers who couldn't care less (at least, not yet) whether we first used the white books or the hardcovers. The new edition is their opportunity to establish a landmark for their own veteran boasts years from now.

At the same time, it's our chance to start fresh and relive some of the thrill we first experienced upon discovering fantasy roleplaying. That's why I'm excited about August 2000, when newbies and veterans alike have cause to celebrate the Year of the Dragon.

Dave Gross, *Editor*

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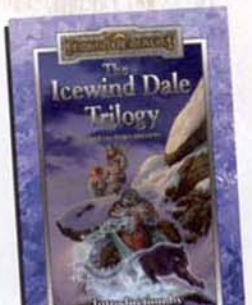

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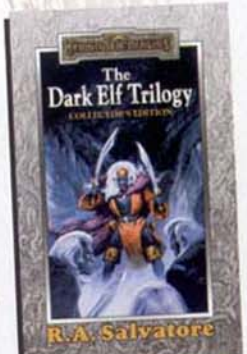

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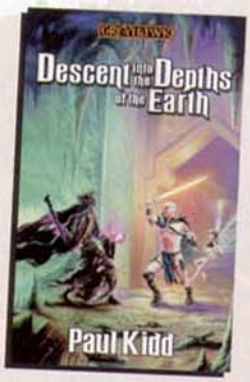

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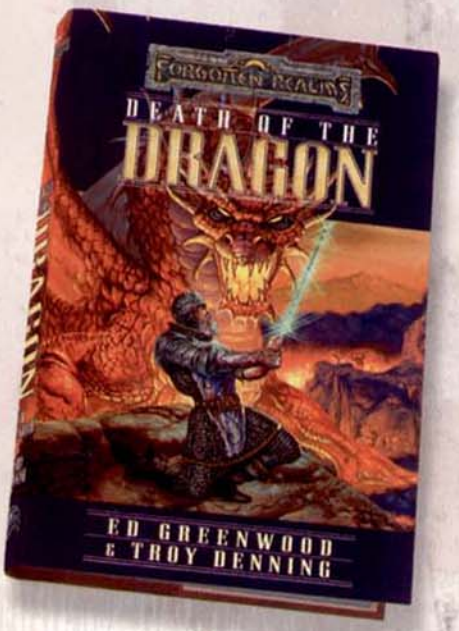

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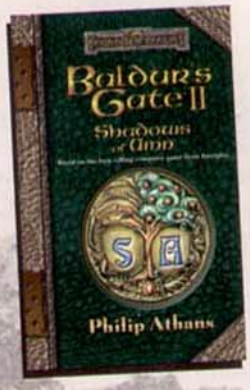

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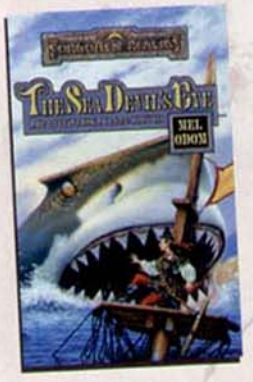

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Playtest Blues

First, the good news. As someone who has been gaming since 1st Edition, I must say that it is great to see the return of Gary Gygax and "What's New" to the pages of *DRAGON Magazine*. (Now if you could only persuade Elmore to bring back "Snarfquest"!)

Now for the true reason for this letter. Like many members of the gaming community, I'd like to know why there are so many drastic changes being made in 3rd Edition? Now I'll admit that when 2nd Edition came out, I was a bit cautious in utilizing it and stuck to my 1st Edition guns for quite some time. However, the differences between 1st and 2nd Edition were quite minor. The 3rd Edition is an entirely different question however.

Back in September (I think) I was privileged to participate in a 3rd Edition game run by Peter Adkison at Shorecon in NJ. I realize that some things have probably changed in 3rd Edition between then and now, but after the game (which was great due to Peter's DMing ability), I was positive that I didn't want to play 3rd Edition. The information revealed in the pages of *DRAGON Magazine* have only added to this feeling.

I am glad to see the return of the barbarian to the classes of the D&D® game, and I could deal with the changing of THAC0 to a THAC10 format (it worked in the GAMMA WORLD® game), but why change the classes so much? Why allow multiclassing to everyone and with any class? (I vaguely recall seeing a mention of a monk/assassin in the magazine a while back.) From my perspective, 3rd Edition will turn the D&D game over to the munchkins and power gamers, replacing tales of overcoming adversity through ingenuity and roleplaying with tales of who killed the most gods.

I hope that I am wrong, and I will definitely look over the 3rd Edition books when they come out, but, as a whole, 3rd Edition has no appeal to me or any of the gamers I know (except one, but he owns a gaming store and doesn't count). However, if 3rd Edition is as much like it was back in September, and includes all of what has been revealed in *DRAGON Magazine*, then I can assure you that I know of quite a large group of gamers who won't be purchasing 3rd Edition books.

Bill Johnson
Lakehurst, NJ

From my perspective, 3rd Edition will turn the D&D game over to the munchkins and power gamers ...

Take heart, Bill: You're wrong.

The "Countdown to 3rd Edition" articles are a two-edged blade. While their information is accurate, it's also incomplete. Thus, it's easy to extrapolate from them and come to the wrong conclusions about what the 3rd Edition game does (and doesn't) do.

Why so many changes from 2nd Edition? Simply put, the changes make a more elegant, exciting, and versatile game that still captures the D&D atmosphere. In the opinion of the magazine staff (and virtually all of the playtesters), the new edition is a success. Of course, the true test comes in two months, when all the world gets to play it.

Like you, some of us were initially put off when simply reading some of the new rules, like cyclical initiative and open multiclassing—until we actually tried them. In fact, I'm now playing a triple-classed character in one game, trying my best to max-out the system, but the damned thing won't break! The things I've gained by adding a couple of sorcerer and fighter levels to my monk are about equal to the things I've sacrificed by not having four more levels as a single-classed character. However, I've now got the character I imagined when I first rolled stats, and that's where the system shines more brightly than previous editions.

So while you're wrong—at least in our opinion—about 3rd Edition transforming D&D into nothing but a munchkin's paradise, you're right to wait until you see the final product to make up your mind. We think you're in for the same pleasant surprise we had while playtesting.

Thumbs Up and Thumbs Down

DRAGON Magazine Annual #4 wasn't bad at all, but it wasn't all that the Annuals used to be. The regular departments were up to their usual excellent level, and the mirth was indeed mirthful. However, the article "Campaign Holidays" wasn't very good, because there wasn't anything in it that the run-of-the-mill DM couldn't think up on his own. While a mediocre article is forgivable in a regular issue, my expectations from an Annual are considerably higher.

The "Gods of Krynn" is little more than a bunch of statistics—the campaign information was meager. I object to this

Player of the Month

I should like to nominate my friend Fiona Brewster for the "Player of the Month" in your excellent magazine. Our group has been playing together for eight years now. We try to split the Dungeon Master's responsibility and share campaign settings among five of us. Consequently, we have a GREYHAWK®, FORGOTTEN REALMS®, DRAGONLANCE®, two RAVENLOFT®, and a home-grown campaign on the go. Fiona is the player who coordinates us all. With a blend of unbending enthusiasm and huge attention to detail, she makes sure that all the game sessions go smoothly. She keeps the campaign journal for all but one setting, and we begin each game with a synopsis from her book that would rival any of the professional writers that support the D&D game.

For the last eighteen months we have been playtesting the excellent new 3rd Edition rules. Fiona and her notes were an integral part of this process. Recently the group was honored as the "Playtesters of the Month" on the Wizards of the Coast website, and Fiona holds a special place within the group as a principal part of the group's success.

As a player, Fiona is dynamite. Unyielding and forthright, she crushes the bimbo image with her sardonic humor and frenzy in battle. She is both noble and ruthless. Her paladin sacrificed herself by diving into a disintegration beam in order to save the rest of the party. All this was done without a clichéd speech or regret—just a very British stiff upper-lip. Her ruthlessness was wonderfully exemplified at a later time when her barbarian ran through a captured kobold who was desperately pleading for his life. "I don't understand what 'surrender' means," she sneered.

Fiona Brewster

To cap it all off, she recently moved out of London. Rather than give up her weekly game evening, she commutes for 4 hours every week to continue to be our champion player.

—*David Roberts*

sort of article on principle. (If you're wondering what "this sort" means, another example is articles presenting new PC races, wherein fundamentally the only thing given for the races is ability score modifiers and racial level limits. I can do this sort of thing myself, thanks). Besides, why do you print an article about the gods of Krynn that is pertinent to a period of Krynn history that is no longer supported by Wizards of the Coast?

One last bit of criticism on this issue: I have great respect for Mr. Gygax, one of the founders of our hobby and passion. While I found the description of the game's history to be mildly interesting, the attempt at a humorous prediction of the future was not very successful, in my opinion.

Issue #267 was, in a word, superb. The "theme articles" were excellent, original, and well thought-out. Mr. Detwiler's "Designing Dungeon Monsters" will certainly be helpful. Volo's new journeys are also a very desirable feature, as they give ideas it is possible to explore in any campaign setting with some modifications. (This applies to issue #268 as well.) Campaign journals, be they for the MYSTARA®, GREYHAWK, or FORGOTTEN REALMS settings, are always welcome, as far as I'm concerned.

I have problems with your making the spider-on-the-table person the DM of the Month.

The humor was excellent and, as always, very enjoyable. The fiction, however, was not very good and seemed more of a promotion for a book than a stand-alone piece. I've seen that a lot in *DRAGON Magazine* in recent years, and I strongly disapprove of it, although I understand the pressures that are the downside of corporate ownership.

Last but not least, Mr. Gygax's "Up On a Soapbox" (and this applies to his words in issue #268 as well): I think we're all past the age when we need comforting if someone calls us names. I see no place for this column in the magazine as it appears in these two issues. I would rather you left this important work of teaching gamers how to get by in the world to their families.

On to issue #268: First of all, kudos for the first-class fiction! This is the difference between book promotion and stand-alone pieces. I have been a great fan of J. Gregory Keyes since I read his book *The Waterborn*. If you can wrangle any more fiction from him, by all means do so! The articles "Ill-Gotten Gains" and "Secrets of the Brotherhood of True Flame" were very good. I did not much appreciate "The Armory Annex" and "Before the Bow." I don't think that they add much that is new to the game but rather made a failed attempt to put a new twist on a familiar subject. "Bazaar of the Bizarre" this month was exceptionally good, and "FX Artifacts" and "Arcane Lore" were also very fine indeed.

"Forum" recently seems to have lost direction. It seems too much like an "Expanded D-Mail"! What I liked about "Forum" were the heated discussions on game-related issues, be they rules or house rules, or letters on solving problems in the game. This is no longer the case. I especially disliked the printing of "Forum" submissions consisting of some gamer's contributing, "I like using this" and "this product is neat" impressions. With all due respect, I hope this changes in the future.

One final thing: Mr. Foglio's "What's New" is not very good, and I wouldn't miss it if it were to vanish from the pages of the magazine, despite the flattering images of the editorial staff mentioned in response to a letter recently ...

Despite this criticism, know that I hold the magazine in high regard, and I am over-all highly pleased with it. I certainly feel that I'm getting my money's worth, all things considered.

Oran Magal
Israel
magalart@zahav.net.il

Hold On!

I was greatly disturbed by "Sage Advice" in *DRAGON Magazine* #268. I usually agree with the rulings on the problems the Sage deals with, but this one doesn't seem to be based on anything but opinion. While even the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* and *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* contradict the latest advice on *hold* spells (as they require saving throws vs. spell and not paralysis), page 134 of the *Player's Handbook* states that the importance of saving throw priority begins with paralysis and ends with spells (which is a catch-all category for anything that doesn't fit into any other categories). Also on that page, it states that the paralysis/poison/petrification saving throw is used when a paralysis attack affects a character, regardless of the source.

"Sage Advice" states that *hold* spells are in a completely different category than paralysis, but if one reads the *Player's Handbook* on page 139, the only example the book gives *is* a *hold* spell.

I would love some documented clarification on saving throw priority and paralysis versus *hold* spells. This bit of "Sage Advice" doesn't affect my home games, but I play in LIVING CITY™ games, and we rely on "Sage Advice" to quell any arguments regarding the rules.

Victor Greenwalt
Honolulu, HI

Among the many other things 3rd Edition should do is clear the slate of confusing discrepancies among 2nd Edition rulebooks. Working out the kinks in over a decade's worth of game material has got to be what makes the Sage so cranky. On the other hand, it also makes his opinion worthwhile. Here's what he has to say on the matter:

"Hold and paralysis are not the same thing, despite the unfortunate bit of text in the Player's Handbook *that implies it is. (As it happens, once a hold takes effect, it works just like paralysis.) Hold effects are enchantment effects that allow a saving throw vs. spell with a Wisdom modifier. Paralysis effects use a paralyzation saving throw. This ruling is based on long usage in the D&D game and on the* hold *spells' presence in the Enchantment/Charm school."*

No DM of Mine ...

I have problems with your making the spider-on-the-table-person the DM of the Month. I don't think that this is a sign of a good DM. If I were in this game, we'd have had some serious words about this your-character-reacts-the-same-way-you-do business. I don't play the D&D game to be myself in another world. One of the great things about this game is the ability to be someone we are not. This game would get so much worse if at the table I were to say "I cast this spell" and the DM were to say, "Well, go ahead."

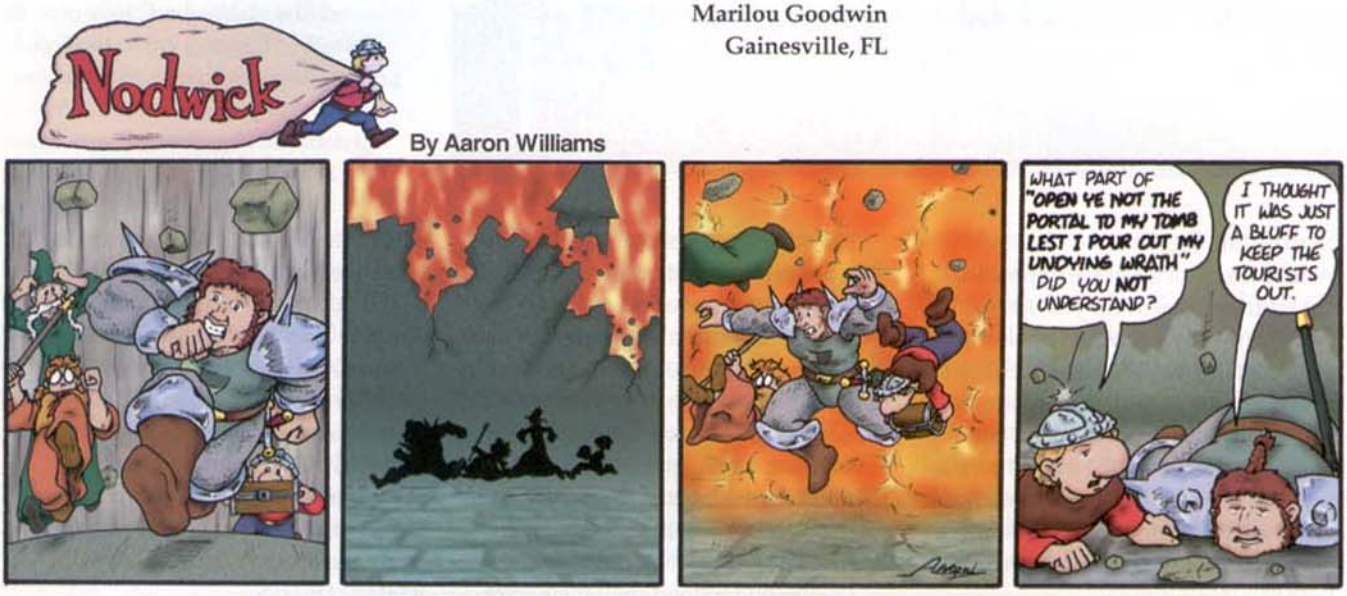
This is a fantasy world with fantasy characters. I am not an elf. I wasn't born or raised in Krynn. The best I can do is make a personality for a character I have

chosen with a background that sounds interesting and try to keep that up for the duration. If a big man confronts me with a sword, I (as Marilou) would run. In the game, it depends on which character I'm playing. Dianne, a priestess, might have wanted to talk the problem out. Tabiti, the paladin, would have pulled out her sword out for a different kind of discussion.

I am glad that DM's players were happy with the outcome. I'm also glad I was not there, and I'm sure their whole group was glad I wasn't around for the post-spider discussion. I just wanted to let you know that I strongly disagree with your selection as DM of the Month a person who forces his players to be only what they already are rather than what they think they should be.

Marilou Goodwin
Gainesville, FL

While we're not elves, either, we think the spider-on-the-table guy is hilarious! That's not to say we'd play in his game, because hairy spiders on the table would soon reveal us as big sissies, and that's a secret we'd like to keep.


Nodwick
By Aaron Williams
WHAT PART OF "OPEN YE NOT THE PORTAL TO MY TOMB LEST I POUR OUT MY UNDYING WRATH" DID YOU NOT UNDERSTAND?
I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A BLUFF TO KEEP THE TOURISTS OUT.
www.nodwick.com

Forum

Question of the Month

Respond to the Question of the Month or any other roleplaying topic by mailing "Forum," DRAGON® magazine, ***1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA; dmail@wizards.com.*** Include your full name and mailing address; we won't print a letter sent anonymously. We'll withhold your name or print your full address if you wish.

How do you change campaigns? Do you keep the same characters or start over completely?

Scott's 3E Remix

When I first learned of the impending 3rd Edition, I was overjoyed. At last, I thought, the system would be cleaned up. Initial previews led me to believe I would need only four or five pages of house rules, instead of the 30+ I currently use. However, the more information was released, the more concerned I became. Thus, I am writing to air my opinions, in the hopes of influencing 3rd Edition's development.

Dropping Exceptional Strength and the word "Advanced" are a good start, but emphasizing high-level powergaming is unforgivable. The lesser vampire sketch looks nothing like a vampire and everything like an excuse for mauling PCs.

Assassins make great NPCs, but, as much as I like Jackie Chan's movies, I find monks unplayable.

The new Armor Class rules first appeared as Attack and Defense Values in *DRAGON® Magazine* issue #249, and they have been a house rule of mine for some time now. (The players love them.) Level limits were thrown out of my campaigns years ago and replaced with an experience point penalty system. Free-for-all multiclassing seems okay at first glance but prompted one player to ask, "What's the point of playing humans, then?"

Assassins make great NPCs, but, as much as I like Jackie Chan's movies, I find monks unplayable.

The 4d6 method of character generation has been a standard in most of the campaigns I've run or played in for the past ten years, so making it official is fine by me. I'm still undecided about the new initiative system. I've always used 10-second rounds, so 6 seconds is okay. In my campaigns, any natural 20 is a critical hit, causing maximum plus reroll damage, plus a one-round stun or cinematic effect at the DM's discretion.

I never understood spell memorization, let alone bonus spells for priests, and I have been using a modification of the *PLAYER'S OPTION®* spell point system for some years now. Swapping spells for healing is stupid; it's effectively a poor man's spell point system, so why not go all the way? Furthermore, it over-emphasizes the much-loathed healing and support role of the cleric.

The dwarven wizard looks pretty good and almost makes me want to play one. Strip off half the pockets and pouches and throw away the cigar, and I definitely would make my first 3rd Edition PC a dwarven wizard.

Please, isn't it time we dropped gnomes and halflings altogether? True, every campaign needs a resident short race, but gnomes and halflings are uninteresting, annoying, unadventurous, pathetic, and unplayable. Why not replace them with goblins and a pixie or spritelike faerie race?

The rules for specialty priests in the *Complete Priest's Handbook* are the definitive work on the subject. The simple rules from the 1983 World of GREYHAWK® supplement are quite good as well. *Faiths & Avatars* is an abomination. I tailor specialty priests to the campaign, an approach that has gotten me into many arguments with FORGOTTEN REALMS® fanatics.

I threw out the Turn Undead table years ago in favor of a saving-throw–like system. One modifier to the roll is derived from the level difference between the priest and the undead; depending on the roll, an undead might flee, flee and suffer damage (1d6 plus the priest's level), or be destroyed. For Control Undead, the worse the saving throw result, the longer the duration. Applying a Charisma modifier seems wrong to me; facing down the hordes of darkness with little more than a holy symbol is more an act of piety and willpower, thus earning a Wisdom modifier, in my mind.

Priest spells at 8th and 9th level also worry me. Although I like the idea of a spell having the same description for both wizards and priests, giving higher-level spells to priests blurs the line between the two classes and sends the wrong message in terms of powergaming.

Multiple attacks for all characters is dead wrong. I have enough trouble coordinating weapon specialist multiple attacks and rate-of-fire as it is. The one action or attack per character per round

rules worked fine, especially with a 6-second round.

As the GREYHAWK® setting is being restored to its rightful position as the official setting of the D&D® game, perhaps now we can finally drive a stake through the heart of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. I am sick to death of Elminster and Drizzt Do'Urden, and the next player who asks to play a dark elf or to visit Shadowdale will be kicked out of my group. The Realms are massively overdeveloped, leading to a situation where the players not only know the setting better than the DM but will abuse this knowledge at every opportunity.

That's where I stand on 3E. I've been a gamer since 1986, and there's no way I'm going to let a rules conversion screw up my campaign. Sure, I'll buy the new books. Who won't? But I strongly suspect I'll stick to 2nd Edition plus house rules.

Scott Wylie Roberts
Perth, Western Australia

Drain This!

I would like to offer my bit of reasoning regarding level draining. Like most DMs, I have changed and modified a few official rules to make play a bit smoother and to fit my style of gaming.

One of the first changes I made was the concept of level draining. I spent more then a few spare moments trying to figure out what experience actually is and why creatures could actually remove it. Here is my conclusion:

Experience is basically the lessons people have learned and stored in memory. So to lose experience, they must lose the knowledge or memory of what they have learned. I have justified many of the different types of drainings by the shock, horror, or other mental trauma caused by the attack. The only modification I made with the rules is that the drain is temporary.

I have found that using these small changes not only puts a more playable feel to draining but also keeps the players happy … Well, sort of …

Krag Kadera
Scottsdale, AZ

I have justified many of the different types of drainings by the shock, horror, or other mental trauma caused by the attack.

Damage Done

It seems like every gamer I know is excited about the 3rd Edition D&D game. All of the hints I've seen in *DRAGON Magazine* and on the website sound great! One thing that I've seen in "Forum" a lot over the past few years, but I don't think has come up with regards to 3rd Edition, is weapon damage. I've always thought that having different damage ratings

for Small- and Large-sized creatures was silly.

First, the damage variations are inconsistent. Why would all swords do more damage to Large creatures except a broadsword, which does less? Why do some weapons inflict 1d8 points of damage to one size category and 2d4 to another? It's not really the inconsistencies that bug me the most, though. It is the illogic. I got to thinking about it after reading the comment that the logic of magic was being reworked for 3rd Edition, and I thought, well, let's rethink the logic of damage. Keep in mind that I have absolutely no knowledge of real world sword-fighting, and so on; I just want to see the game make more sense and still be playable. I have two suggested ways of handling damage; one is simple and one is a bit more complex, though really no more complex than the current method.

1. Drop the different damages, and make all weapons have one damage rating. Really, why would a Large creature take more damage from a big sword than a Small one? Intuitively, it seems the opposite to me, if anything. This is quick and dirty, but very easy and still makes more sense to me than the current system.

2. Instead of having different damage categories for the opponent's size, have different categories for the opponent's armor type. This is a new stat. I would limit the number of types to two or three at the most, thereby adding no more complexity to the game. Instead of keeping track of the opponent's size and the weapon's damage versus different size opponents, just keep track of the opponent's armor type.

Two types immediately come to mind: rigid (scale mail, hide armor, banded armor, plate mail, field plate, full plate, bone, a carapace, stony creatures, dragons' scales, and so forth) and flexible (a creature's skin or hide, padded armor, leather armor, studded leather armor, ring mail armor, brigandine armor, and chain mail). Another type, mixed, could be added, but probably would not provide much benefit.

Heavy weapons that are good against rigid armor, such as two-handed weapons, hammers, and so on, should do more damage to rigid armor types. Weapons that slash should do more damage to flexible armor types. The strength of either type of armor is accounted for in the creature's armor class. Obviously, a stone golem is going to be less likely to be damaged than a guy in banded armor, even though both have rigid armor. (On a side note, this means that many creatures' armor classes should be re-examined, such as the stone golem, which should probably have a better armor class than a guy in full plate. It's a walking rock, for goodness sake.)

Isn't it time we dropped gnomes and halflings altogether.

Lastly, this can fix the troublesome crossbow damage versus arrow damage argument, by having arrows deal much less damage to rigid armor types than crossbow bolts. For example, I'd recommend a longbow arrow inflicting 1d6+1 points of damage against flexible armor and 1d4 points of damage versus opponents in rigid armor. A shortbow arrow would inflict 1d6 points of damage against flexible armor and 1d3 points of damage to someone in rigid armor. Finally, a light crossbow would cause 1d6+2 points of damage regardless of armor type, and a heavy crossbow would inflict 1d10+2 points of damage.

I hope that this inspires some thought. As I said, I look forward to 3rd Edition!

Steve Hammer
Portland, OR

Dragons Never Forget ...

What was our group's strangest encounter with a dragon? In a puddle of wine on a table in the House of Good Spirits in Waterdeep.

This comes from having a kind of cruel yet fun DM who knows too much about the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting and five accidental heroes. Oh yeah, and it's partly Ed Greenwood and *DRAGON Magazine's* fault.

The dragon in question is Balagos, who was presented in the "Wyrms of the North" series. My character calls him "One-eyed Bob," since all she has ever seen of him is one big eye, which is taller than she is. "One-eyed Bob" is the really big, really old red dragon who lives not too far north of Waterdeep. He doesn't like the black dragon in the swamp being turned into a dracolich, but rather than go out there and have to fuss over him himself, Bob decides that the five of us, having been in the Mere of Dead Men at one point, look like a fairly comical and thoroughly insulting defeat to his rival. And if we lose, so what? The five of us, not being willing to argue with something whose eye is bigger than we are, agree to take up the quest of hunting down the undead creature in question before he regains his strength.

That was at 3rd level. We're now around 8th level and haven't gotten to the dracolich yet. We have, however, succeeded in releasing its companion (a vampire wizard), so that it can have a good tutor to learn spells. (May I stress the "accidental" I mentioned previously. As in, we made a mistake and have to go fix it.) Bob, having had to defend his territory from the dracolich and his undead buddy the night before, knocks over our glasses during lunch at the above-mentioned tavern, pooling the liquid in the center, through which, our party, now having a list of things to save, kill, rescue, and destroy, can see only the one eye. He is a little miffed about the night before, since this was supposed to be our job, not his, and he informs us in no uncertain terms that he is not pleased and will be having us for dinner when he gets better.

We are currently banking on the hope that it will be a while before Bob gets better. However, just to be on the safe side, we have taken to Undermountain in the hopes that maybe he will have just a little bit of trouble finding us in there. Halastar or Bob—who gets to wax us first?

Keeley Markham
Montgomery, AL

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Convention Calendar

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Laire-Con
June 2–4 NJ
Camp Sacajewia, New Jersey
Contact: Adam Krat
Email: mayoraloe@aol.com

Milwaukee Summer Revel 4
June 15–18 WI
Sheraton Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI
Contact: Milwaukee Summer Revel
P.O. Box 779
New Munster, WI 53152.
Website: www.rli-net/~melka/msr/index.htm

JULY

UK Games Fest 2000
July 1 ✪
The Sportcentre, Harlow, Essex, UK
Contact: Jan Eldredge 264 The Dashes, Harlow, Essex CM20 3RZ UK
Email: uk_games@virgin.net
Website: www.freespace.virgin.net/utopian.tiger/gf.htm

Laire-Con
July 7–9 NJ
Camp Sacajewia, New Jersey
Contact: Adam Krat
Email: mayoraloe@aol.com

Origins
July 13-16 OH
Columbus Conventions Center
Contact: Wizards of the Coast
P.O. Box 1740
Renton, WA 98057
Website: www.wizards.com/origins
1-800-529-EXPO

PATRIOT GAMES
July 13–16 VA
Holiday Inn Express,
Fredersicksburg, VA
Contact: David T. Darnell
Email: David.Darnell@VRPA.org
Website: www.VRPA.org/PatriotGames.html

AUGUST

Gamefest XXI
August 4-13 CA
Game Towne, San Diego, CA
Contact: Shannon Grove or John Hall
Game Towne, San Diego CA 92110
3954 Harney St
Email: gametowne@yahoo.com
Website: www.gametowne.com

GEN CON® Game Fair
August 10-13 WI
Midwest Express Center
Milwaukee, WI
Contact: Wizards of the Coast
P.O. Box 1740
Renton, WA 98057
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Howard Johnson East
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Website: www.con-quest.com

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Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *DRAGON® Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 204-7254 (U.S.A.).

Important: *DRAGON Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

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Andy Collins

by Stephen Kenson

Andy Collins grew up in Olympia, WA and had what he calls "a fairly normal gamer youth." He got a copy of the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® boxed set from his uncle Ralph for his tenth birthday, which started him on the road to roleplaying.

"I'm sure Uncle Ralph had no idea what he was starting," Andy says. He didn't know any other D&D® players at the time, and it took him the better part of a year to figure out how to play a game with no board and no pieces. But then "my brother, a friend, and I sat down to play one day. Nine hours later, we'd missed both lunch and dinner, and we were all hooked."

Andy continued gaming throughout high school and college, graduating from Stanford University in 1994 with a degree in English. In April of 1996, Andy joined Wizards of the Coast. "I actually got the call telling me I got the job on April Fool's Day," he says. "Four years later, I'm still waiting for somebody to come up to me and say 'April Fools!' I don't know if the joke would be on me or them!"

After working for a time for Wizards' Organized Play division, Andy moved over to the R&D division, working as both an editor and designer. His first project? A new science-fiction game line.

No Limits

Andy worked on a number of products for the ALTERNITY® line, notably the DARK•MATTER™ campaign setting, which he calls "the best thing Wizards ever published." He edited a number of other ALTERNITY books and found the game system to be the best he'd ever encountered at the time.

The product of "a fairly normal gamer youth."

Alignment?
A solid neutral good. I recognize and respect institutions and governments and such, but I can't stand unfairness.

Describe yourself in one word.
Eclectic.

Favorite RPG?
D&D 3rd Edition. I get some flack for saying so, but I believe it.

Favorite TV show?
If not for my Simpsons quotes, I'd be useless in a conversation.

Favorite book?
Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card. When I finished reading it, I turned back to page one and started reading it again.

Favorite Star Wars character?
Luke Skywalker. When we were kids, my brother was always Han, and I was always Luke.

Favorite D&D character class?
Rogue. My character has to be good at a bunch of things.

Celebrity you'd invite to your D&D game?
Edward Norton.

Favorite game adventure?
Monte Cook's *Dead Gods*. Amazing to read and to run. He took new ideas and combined them with elements of the game that were almost twenty years old.

Darth Vader or Darth Maul?
Vader's got the experience and overall power, but in a basic lightsaber fight, I think Maul might have the edge.

Favorite gaming food?
The chip, in any of its many forms.

Wizards' decision to bring the ALTERNITY line to a close brought out mixed feelings in Andy and most of the Wizards staffers who worked on the line. "At the time, [the end of ALTERNITY] didn't come as a big surprise to us. It's hard to see it go, particularly since it's the line I cut my teeth on. There are more stories we wanted to tell, particularly with the DARK•MATTER SETTING. I would have loved to expand on a few more stories from the core campaign setting, but there isn't one of us in R&D who doesn't understand the realities of the business at this point. The game just didn't catch on as strongly as we would have liked."

Andy also feels ALTERNITY suffered from a problem that plagues all "generic" science fiction games: too much source material. "Fantasy archetypes are very direct. Everyone knows what a wizard is. Even when it's easy to latch on to a science-fiction archetype, there are simply too many of them. It can be hard to get people to agree on exactly what they expect out of 'science fiction' and what they want to see in a SF game."

But there was a science fiction setting everyone could agree on, and it became Andy's next project.

A LONG TIME AGO, IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY...

Andy's "normal gamer youth" included seeing Star Wars several times when it first hit theaters and dreaming of becoming a Jedi Knight like Luke Skywalker. Now, as the saying goes, although Andy isn't a Jedi in real life, he gets to play one at work. Andy Collins is one of the people at Wizards of the Coast working on the new STAR WARS® Roleplaying Game, and he's having a blast.

"It's a big project," Andy says, with a gift for understatement. "I'm actually

Game designer and editor Andy Collins talks about the new Star Wars® Roleplaying Game.

coming fairly close to the end of my work on it." He describes one of the central challenges of working on the Star Wars RPG as creating a strong rules system while still being able to reflect what everyone thinks a Star Wars game should be like.

The rules system is based on Wizards' "D20" core rules mechanic, much as 3rd Edition D&D game is. "Note, they're both based off the same core mechanic, rather than one being based off the other," Andy says. "The Star Wars Roleplaying Game isn't based on D&D any more than D&D is based on Star Wars." With the basic rules mechanics in place, Andy described the design team's goals as making a game that was exciting to play and remains faithful to the vision of the films. "I remember walking out of *The Phantom Menace* and thinking 'Man, I want to play a Jedi right now.' I'd never played the old Star Wars RPG [from West End Games], but I knew there were people like me who wanted to play a really cool Jedi character. This game lets you do that."

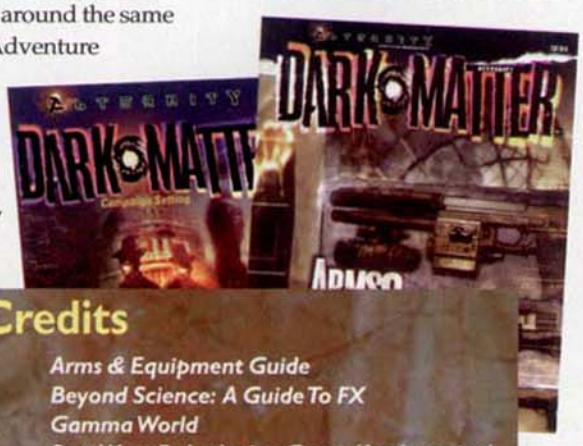
When it comes to the inevitable comparisons to West End's Star Wars Roleplaying Game, Andy comes at it with a fresh perspective. "There are certainly some people who wanted to see something exactly like what they played before, and we can't do that. We can't create an exact copy of West End's Star Wars game. We need to create our own game. There are elements people will recognize from the original game, and there are new things—either because we have years of hindsight to our advantage or because the source material has changed over time."

That source material includes the four Star Wars movies and a tremendous number of books, comics, computer games, and other licensed products. "It's been interesting working with Bill [Slavicsek]. I know all the movies, and I've read several of the books, but he pretty much knows everything about Star Wars—all the books, all the movies, all the comics, all the source material. *Everything*."

Fans can expect to see the Star Wars core game published in a single hardback volume this fall, around the same time as a Star Wars Adventure Game boxed set for beginning players is released, which will contain a simplified set of rules. After that, Wizards has an array of products planned: area sourcebooks to cover major systems, something focusing on the classic trilogy of movies, and general supplements to explore other areas and inhabitants of the Star Wars universe. "What we won't be doing," Andy says, "is blitzing the market with product. You won't see a product a month for the Star Wars game. Our idea is to do fewer products and make sure every one is the best it can be."

Will the new game focus on a particular era of the Star Wars saga? Collins says that isn't decided yet. "As popular as the classic era is, players, particularly players new to the game, will want more from the *Phantom Menace* era, simply because there are more Jedi running around, but we'll be supporting all three main eras: the prequels, the classic trilogy, and the New Jedi Order books."

How does it feel to be a long-time gamer and Star Wars fan, working on a new Star Wars RPG? "I could paraphrase Lou Gehrig. 'I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the Earth to be working in this industry with as many great people as I have around me.' I sometimes still have to pinch myself when I'm walking down the hall."



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Hooray for the Dungeon Crawl!

By Gary Gygax

To say that the dungeon crawl is much maligned understates the vilification that is heaped on this form of gaming. It, along with "munchkins," is spoken of with disdain by many of the vocal proponents of "mature" forms of gaming.

The basic nature of the dungeon craw—lseeking some foe lurking in dark, confined, and unknown spaces—is a key element in some part of almost all action-adventures. In some it might be a special highlight, in others the main content. This is true of computer games, motion pictures, novels, and, yes, even roleplaying games. Of course, not all entertainment is of the action-adventure sort. Of that which is, not all need to include a dungeon-crawl element. That aside, having that element in the mix is not bad. It isn't "immature," and entertainment vehicles that include this component are not "dated" or somehow "less state-of-the-art" than those that neglect the dungeon-crawl aspect.

The number of bestselling computer games featuring the element in question is considerable. (*Doom*, *Quake*, *Duke Nukem*, and *Diablo* spring to mind.) It was also a feature of both *Alien* and *Aliens*, *The Deep*, the remake of *The Mummy*, and the Indiana Jones and *Star Wars* films. Robert E. Howard did a masterful account of a dungeon crawl in his classic short story, "Red Nails." About a century ago, Jules Verne employed it as the central theme of *Journey to the Center of the Earth*.

More recently, the top-selling novel, *Subterranean*, did the same thing. When it comes to roleplaying scenarios, modules if you will, the very first of these were "dungeon crawls"; the most popular are still just that. There is a huge list of titles that range the gamut of reliance on the feature.

The dungeon crawl is classic and undying; it is a valid entertainment device, alone or in combination with others. Granted, we need more than this element to maintain a good campaign. To blithely condemn it, to exclude the dungeon crawl from the repertoire, and to defame those who don't do so as somehow inferior is quite another matter. It is plain stupid.

In assessing the issue, it is pretty clear that a great percentage of new, young game masters and players overdo the use of the dungeon crawl. That such adventuring can quickly become trite and hackneyed when in the hands of the novice is unmistakably clear. This in no way diminishes the worth of the basic element; it simply highlights the inexperience of the participants. It is a matter worth speculating on, this relative fixation of the neophyte on the dungeon crawl. Perhaps the vocal rejection to this element of the roleplaying game and the denigration of those who enjoy it is an over reaction. That is, the fledgling (no matter how long the period of time required to near maturity) realizes the banality of the former exercises and thinks to demonstrate his revelation by condemning those who he perceives as not "modern" in their thinking. Certainly a truly mature game enthusiast would not need to rudely point out the supposed immaturity of a game element, let alone belittle young gamers. Whether from ignorance, malice, or bigotry, it is as plainly wrong as asserting that the dungeon crawl has no part in the roleplaying game. To the contrary, it has been, and will remain, a key element of the themes from which an author draws upon to create a new adventure.

The dungeon crawl is classic and undying ...

Those who reject the dungeon crawl are like painters who refuse to use red pigment in their work. This leaves their palette lacking a primary color. They can create, but their work will, in time, have a deadly sameness and lack of verve. In all fairness, a painter who will use only red is pretty monotonous from the proverbial get-go. However you assess the matter, the "dungeon crawl" is a valid part of the roleplaying game that must remain. It is respectable, entertaining, even compelling when properly employed. Those who use and enjoy it are neither munchkins nor necessarily immature. Finally, the dungeon crawl is as "state-of-the-art" as is any human concept—and that is not at all, of course. The idea is a non sequitur in that we are dealing with humans and the printed word, not technology.

While I would relish dealing the death-stroke to that vacuous claim, some paper games being "state-of-the-art," Noble Reader, I'll set it aside for a future essay. Let us instead consider again the relevance of "munchkins" next issue. It has more to do with the survival of our beloved game form than it does with assailing the snobbish members of this community. It bears upon the fourth essay I wrote here, "Hack-and-Slash." But this prospect will be quite different, I am sure you will agree, when you read it next month.

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Barbarians and Rangers

When our characters encountered a few dozen orc barbarians last session, we almost cheered. The fighter had just gained Great Cleave, and my monk was itching to try out his newly acquired Whirlwind Attack on some lightly armored opponents. "Bring 'em on!"

What we'd failed to consider is how seriously barbarian Rage kicks ass.

Mad, Bad, and Dangerous

The new barbarian is not just a lightly armored wilderness warrior. He's the bloody monster berserker of sword-and-sorcery tales. Instead of "special" abilities like hunting and tracking, this guy starts out with the power to freak out worse than Mel Gibson in all four *Lethal Weapon* movies. Worse yet, you can't run away from this guy!

Play a Barbarian ...

- For berserker rages
- To prevent sneak attacks
- To have the best hit points
- For damage reduction at higher levels
- To show off what half-orcs do best!

You Wouldn't Like Me When I'm Angry

As if starting with the ultra-butch d12 Hit Die weren't enough to prove his badness, the barbarian begins the game with Fast Movement and Rage. Fortunately for opponents, that Rage is limited to once per day, at least until 4th level, when he can do it twice. By 20th level, barbarians can Rage six times per day.

Rage gives a barbarian a temporary +4 bonus to both Strength and Constitution, as well as a +2 morale bonus to Will saves. That means that a raging barbarian gains 2 hit points per level, plus an additional +2 bonus to hit, and it's harder to *charm* him into making nice. At 15th level it becomes much worse, with a +6 Strength and Constitution bonus and a +3 morale bonus to Will saves—and no worse penalty to Armor Class.

The downside to Rage is that the barbarian's also easier to hit, and the Rage lasts only 3 rounds plus 1 round per point of Constitution bonus. (Yes, you can count the "enraged" Constitution for duration.) When the Rage ends, the barbarian is fatigued for the rest of the encounter, suffering a –2 penalty to Strength and Dexterity, and he can't charge or run. Of course, these drawbacks affect only *puny* barbarians. Those who reach 20th level no longer suffer fatigue from Rage, so don't antagonize them.

You Can't Touch This

Rage is the most exciting of a barbarian's class abilities, but it isn't the only one.

With a +33% bonus to Speed (+50% for Small barbarians), the barbarian runs faster than any other member of his race, so he *will* catch you. (Unless you're a monk with even better movement.)

Sneaking around won't help, either, since the barbarian eventually becomes virtually immune to sneak attacks.

Barbarians gain the Uncanny Dodge ability at 2nd level. Unlike other characters, the barbarian with Uncanny Dodge doesn't lose his Armor Class bonus from Dexterity when caught flat-footed. At 5th level, this ability improves so that the barbarian can't be flanked, negating those sneak attacks unless you're four levels higher than the barbarian, at which point your sneak attack works on him. At 10th level and above, Uncanny Dodge lends the barbarian bonuses for avoiding traps, too.

I Didn't Feel a Thing

Perhaps most impressive of the barbarian's class abilities is Damage Reduction. Like some monsters, the barbarian can shrug off small amounts of damage with each blow: 1 point at 11th level, 2 at 14th, 3 at 17th, and 4 at 20th. This extraordinary power can reduce damage to 0 (though not below, so you rules lawyers can forget about healing your barbarians with a flurry of blows).

Back to our group: We barely survived the encounter, but we came away with a valuable lesson: Sure, it's easier to hit barbarians, but you gotta be prepared to hit them good and plenty.

TO THIRD EDITION

11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Bounty Hunters

The biggest change in rangers might be the most subtle and insidious: They're no longer limited to good alignments. Thus, their traditional role as beneficent forest-protectors shifts to that of relentless hunters of prey.

With Enemies Like These ...

Aside from gaining the Track feat for free, rangers have only one special class ability aside from spellcasting ability. Fortunately, they get it in spades.

At first level, rangers choose a favored enemy, as in previous editions of the game. In 3rd Edition, however, that enemy encompasses an entire category of creatures. If a ranger declares enmity with giants, for instance, she gains a bonus against ogres, ettins, hill giants, stone giants, and the rest.

Favored enemy categories include aberrations, animals, beasts, constructs, dragons, elementals, fey, giants, humanoid, magical beasts, oozes, outsider, plants, shapechangers, undead, and vermin. With such broad categories, the favored enemy bonus has never been so useful. Note that two categories, humanoid and outsider, require a more specific definition, since the categories are just a little too broad. A ranger might choose outsider (devils) or humanoid (goblinoid) as a favored enemy.

Getting To Know You

The basic advantage against a favored enemy is a +1 damage bonus, but it gets better.

At 5th, 10th, 15th, and 20th level, a ranger can choose an additional favored enemy. At the same time, all of the bonuses against previously chosen enemies rise by a point. Thus, at 10th level a ranger has three chosen enemies, with bonuses of +3, +2, and +1. This progression leads to some interesting choices for ranger players. On one hand, it's nice to have your best bonus be against powerful creatures like aberrations or constructs, but how many beholders or golems are you likely to encounter (or survive encountering) at low levels?

The icing on the cake is that favored enemy damage bonuses apply not only to melee attacks but also to ranged attacks within 30 feet. Thus, the ranger is an expert not only at finding her quarry but also at nailing it to the ground.

Nowhere To Hide

Having enemies isn't just about punching them in the nose. First you've got to find them, and sometimes you might want to ask 'em a few questions before dispensing with their worthless hides. Thus, the favored enemy bonus kicks in not only when fighting but also when using skills such as Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Wilderness Lore (which is used for tracking and hunting your enemies). That way, even after they know you're coming, they can't lie, hide, or run away from the beating they so richly deserve.

Finally, don't dismiss the ranger's spellcasting ability, which kicks in at 4th level now, not 8th.

This month, check out the huge sneak preview of monsters in the 3rd Edition game in Skip Williams's "King and Queen of Dragons"—you won't be seeing this pair anywhere else for a long time.

And join us next month for a look at the most mysterious of the new D&D® classes: the sorcerer!

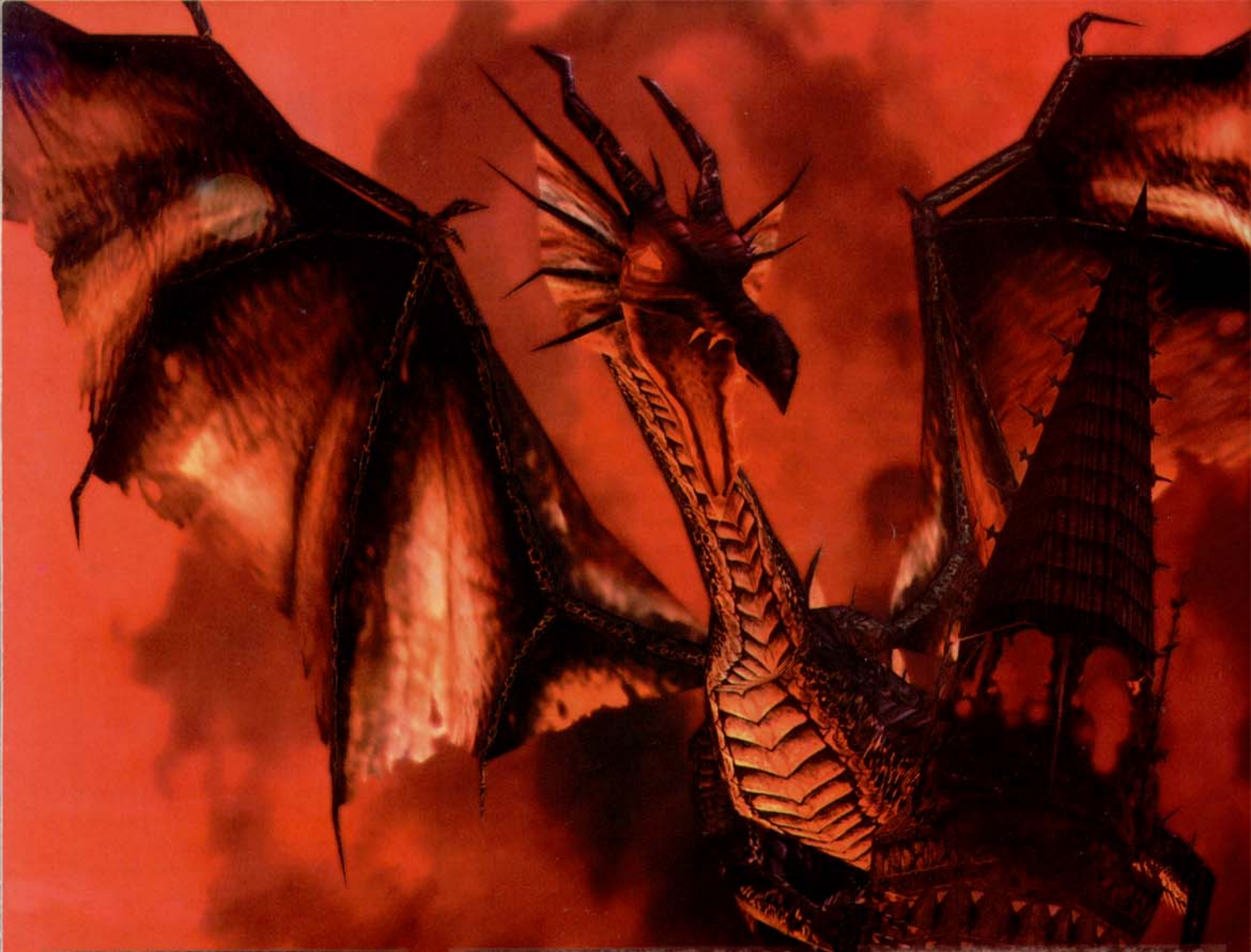
Play a Ranger ...

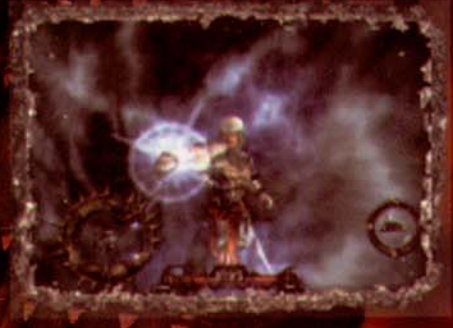
- For favored enemy bonuses
- To cast divine spells
- For Track as a bonus feat
- To gain Improved Two-Weapon Fighting more easily
- For great class skills

The Alignment Shuffle

Unlike their 1st- and 2nd-Edition counterparts, the new rangers can be any alignment. In fact, only five classes in the new D&D game have alignment restrictions, and most of those are fairly broad.

Class	Alignment requirement
Barbarians	non-lawful
Bards	non-lawful
Druids	must have some neutral
Monks	lawful
Paladins	lawful good





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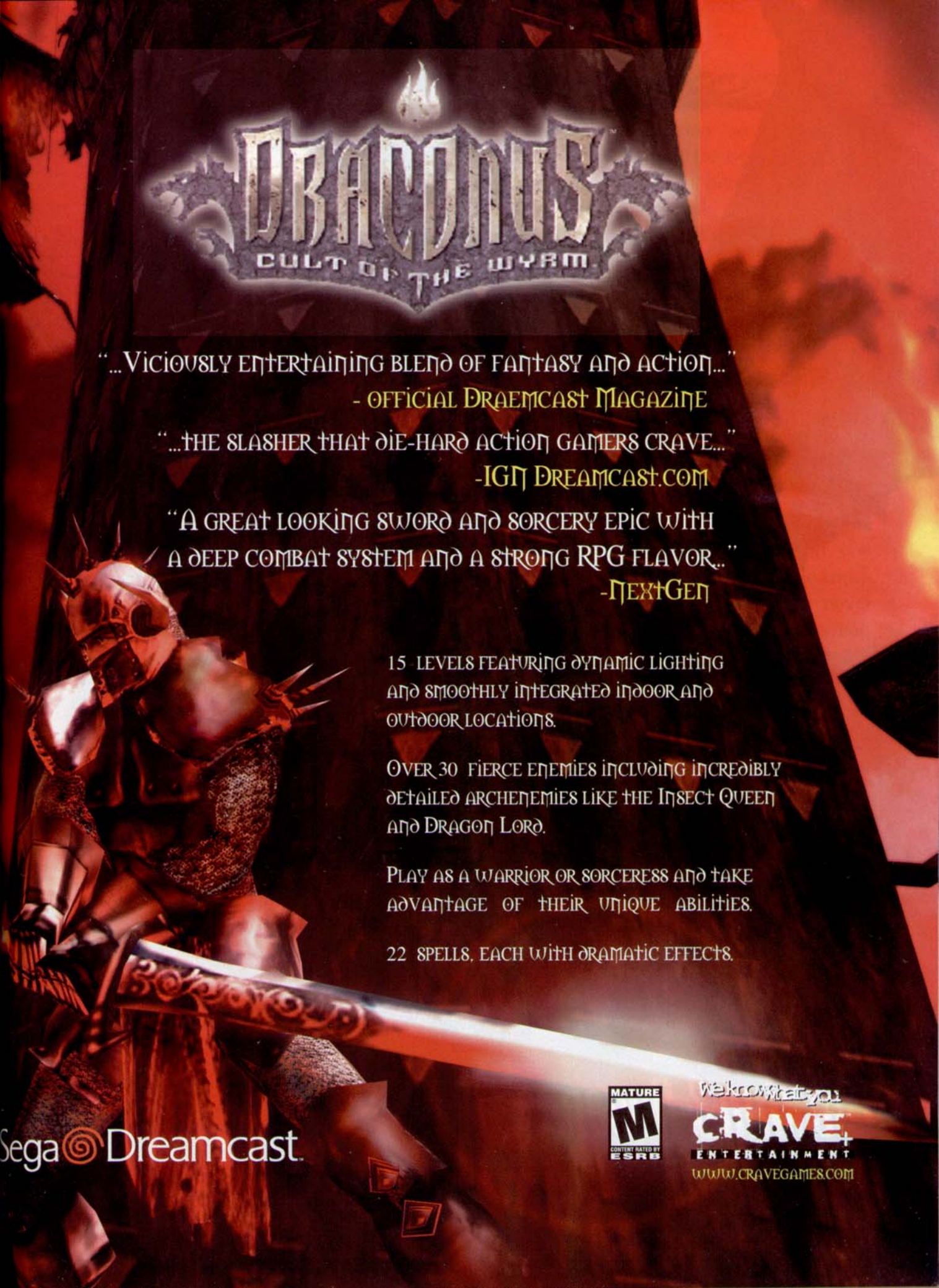
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The King & Queen of Dragons

Bahamut & Tiamat

by Skip Williams

illustrated by Carl Critchlow

Of all the creatures ever created for the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game, none have fired the imagination so strongly as Bahamut and Tiamat, the two most powerful dragons of all. So, here they are once again, with scales, teeth, and claws newly polished and presented as monsters for the 3rd Edition D&D® game.

Of course, Bahamut and Tiamat are not mere monsters, but deity-class creatures (perhaps full-fledged deities); as such, the statistics presented here are only approximations based on the present knowledge of mortal sages. Perhaps we will learn more about them in the future.

Each of the two entities presented here are more than a match for a party of 20th-level characters all by themselves. Throw in their respective entourages and you have enough power to level whole countries (or worlds). Such creatures are never suitable as mere dungeon fodder, no matter how powerful the characters facing them are.

Both dragons are beings who live and act on a cosmic scale, so use them appropriately. Tiamat concerns herself with spreading evil, defeating good, and propagating evil dragons. She enjoys razing the occasional village (or city, or country), but only as a diversion as she weaves subtle and world-spanning plots. She is the villain who lurks in the shadows, whose presence is felt, but who is seldom seen. Bahamut is among the most compassionate beings in the multiverse. He is dedicated to the cause of good but prefers to let mortals find their own way; he is the main reason Tiamat must work in secret. Bahamut is an old hermit whose subtle prophecy unlocks a great mystery (provided the players are wise enough to use and recognize the clue), or the kind stranger who offers a safe refuge or that badly needed spell.

3rd Edition Exclusive!

The new incarnations of Tiamat and Bahamut are not slated to appear anywhere else in the foreseeable future, so this sneak preview of 3rd Edition monsters is also the official return of the most fearsome dragons in the D&D world!

Bahamut

Colossal Dragon

Hit Dice: 53d12+742 (1,086 hp)
Initiative: +4 (Improved Initiative)
Speed: 60 ft., Fly 300 ft. (poor), Sw 60 ft.
AC: 54 (–8 size, +52 natural)
Attacks: Bite, +66 melee; 2 claws, +61 melee; 2 wings, +61 melee; tail slap, +61 melee
Damage: Bite, 4d8+21; claw, 4d6+10; wing, 2d8+10; tail slap, 4d6+10
Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 50 ft./20 ft.
Special Attacks: Breath weapons, frightful presence, spells, spell-like abilities
Special Defenses: Scent, spell resistance 30, damage reduction (25/+4), immunities, *see invisibility*, keen senses, *water breathing*
Saves: Fort +43, Ref +29, Will +42
Abilities: Str 53, Dex 10, Con 39, Int 35, Wis 36, Cha 35
Skills: Alchemy +40, Animal Empathy +40, Bluff +65, Concentration +72, Diplomacy +65, Disguise +34, Escape Artist +56, Gather Information +65, Heal +41, Intimidate +65, Intuit Direction +41, Knowledge (arcana) +34, Knowledge (dragonkind) +37, Knowledge (history) +34, Knowledge (nature) +34, Knowledge (the planes) +34, Knowledge (religion) +34, Listen +71, Scry +68, Search +65, Sense Motive +69, Spellcraft +68, Spot +71, Wilderness Lore +41
Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Hover, Improved Critical (Bite), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Expertise, Fly-By Attack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-like Ability (*sunburst*), Snatch, Wingover
Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground
Organization: Solitary (1), Troupe (Bahamut and seven great gold wyrms).
Challenge Level: 25 (solitary)
Treasure: When traveling, Bahamut carries his magic items and 1d8+4 gems of various sizes. Bahamut's palace contains 2d4 level 20 treasures.
Alignment: Always lawful good
Advancement Range: N/A

Also known as the Platinum Dragon and the King of the Good Dragons, Bahamut is revered as a deity in many locales. Although all good dragons pay homage to Bahamut, gold, silver, and brass dragons hold him in particularly high regard. Other dragons, even evil ones (save perhaps, his arch-rival Tiamat), respect Bahamut for his wisdom and power.

In his natural form, Bahamut is a long, sinuous dragon covered in silver-white scales that sparkle and gleam even in the dimmest light. Bahamut's catlike eyes are a deep blue, as azure as a midsummer sky, some say. Others insist that Bahamut's eyes are a frosty indigo, like the heart of a glacier. Perhaps the two accounts merely reflect the Platinum Dragon's shifting moods.

The location of Bahamut's home seems to breed disagreement among sages. Some insist that he dwells in a great palace behind the north wind and add Master of the North Wind to his list of titles; other, older tales say Bahamut dwells behind the east wind, in a fabulous palace of the same name. In any case, Bahamut visits the world often, usually in the guise of an old man or a callow youth. He is always accompanied by an honor guard of seven great gold wyrms that take the forms of fellow travelers or animals. Bahamut keeps a wary eye out for the machinations of Tiamat, taking whatever actions he deems necessary to check the spread of her influence and to undo whatever damage she has wrought. Bahamut will never turn his back on a lawful good creature in peril, but seldom intervenes directly if Tiamat is not involved. Instead, he offers healing, advice, or information. Bahamut's wanderings have given rise to many bard's tales, the best known of which relates a roadside meeting with an unassuming old man and his flock of seven trained canaries. None would have been the wiser, says the tale, had a band of ogres led by an ogre mage not chosen to sweep down upon the crowd.

Bahamut speaks many languages, including Draconic, Celestial, Auran, and Common, though he can converse with any intelligent creature.

Combat

Bahamut is a dangerous adversary. If the opposition is both evil and fairly weak, he might simply loose his breath weapon or a high-level spell and obliterate the foe in an instant. If unsure of the foe's strength, Bahamut prefers to fight cautiously, relying on spells and his shapechanging ability to test the foe's mettle before attacking in earnest.

Breath Weapons (Su): Bahamut has three different breath weapons:

Cold: A cone of cold 80 feet long that inflicts 36d10 points of damage. A Reflex saving throw vs. DC 50 reduces the damage by half.

Gaseous Form: A swirling mist that fills a cone 80 feet long. Creatures within the cone are stunned and turned into gaseous form for 32 rounds. A Fortitude saving throw vs. DC 50 negates the effect.

Disintegration: A beam of blue light that fills an area 5 feet high, 5 feet wide, and 160 feet long. Creatures are obliterated if they fail a Fortitude saving throw vs. DC 50. Creatures who make successful saving throws still suffer 18d10 points of damage. The beam blows a 5-foot × 5-foot × 160-foot hole in objects if they fail their saving throws and inflicts 18d10 points of damage if they make their saving throws.

Once Bahamut uses a breath weapon, he must wait 1d4 rounds before he can breathe again, no matter which breath weapon he has used.

Frightful Presence (Ex): Bahamut can unsettle foes with his mere presence. The power takes effect automatically whenever Bahamut attacks, charges, or flies overhead. Creatures within a radius of 480 feet are subject to the effect if they have 52 or fewer Hit Dice.

An affected creature can resist the effect by making a successful Will saving throw vs. DC 48. A successful saving throw makes a creature immune to Bahamut's frightful presence for one day. Creatures with 4 Hit Dice or fewer become panicked for 4d6 rounds if they fail their saving throw. Creatures with 5 or more Hit Dice become shaken for 4d6 rounds if they fail their saving throw. Good dragons (and Tiamat) ignore the effects of Bahamut's frightful presence.

Spells: Bahamut is a 20th-level sorcerer and a 20th-level cleric with access to the Good and Air domains. In his natural form, Bahamut can cast his spells with but a word.

Spell-like Abilities: Bahamut can use the following spell-like abilities each three times a day as a 20th-level caster: *control water, control winds, control weather, create food and water, detect thoughts, feather fall, fog cloud, foresight, quest, speak with animals*, and *sunburst*. Bahamut also can use *shapechange* at will as a 20th-level sorcerer.

Where applicable, the saving throw DCs against these abilities are 14 plus the spell level.

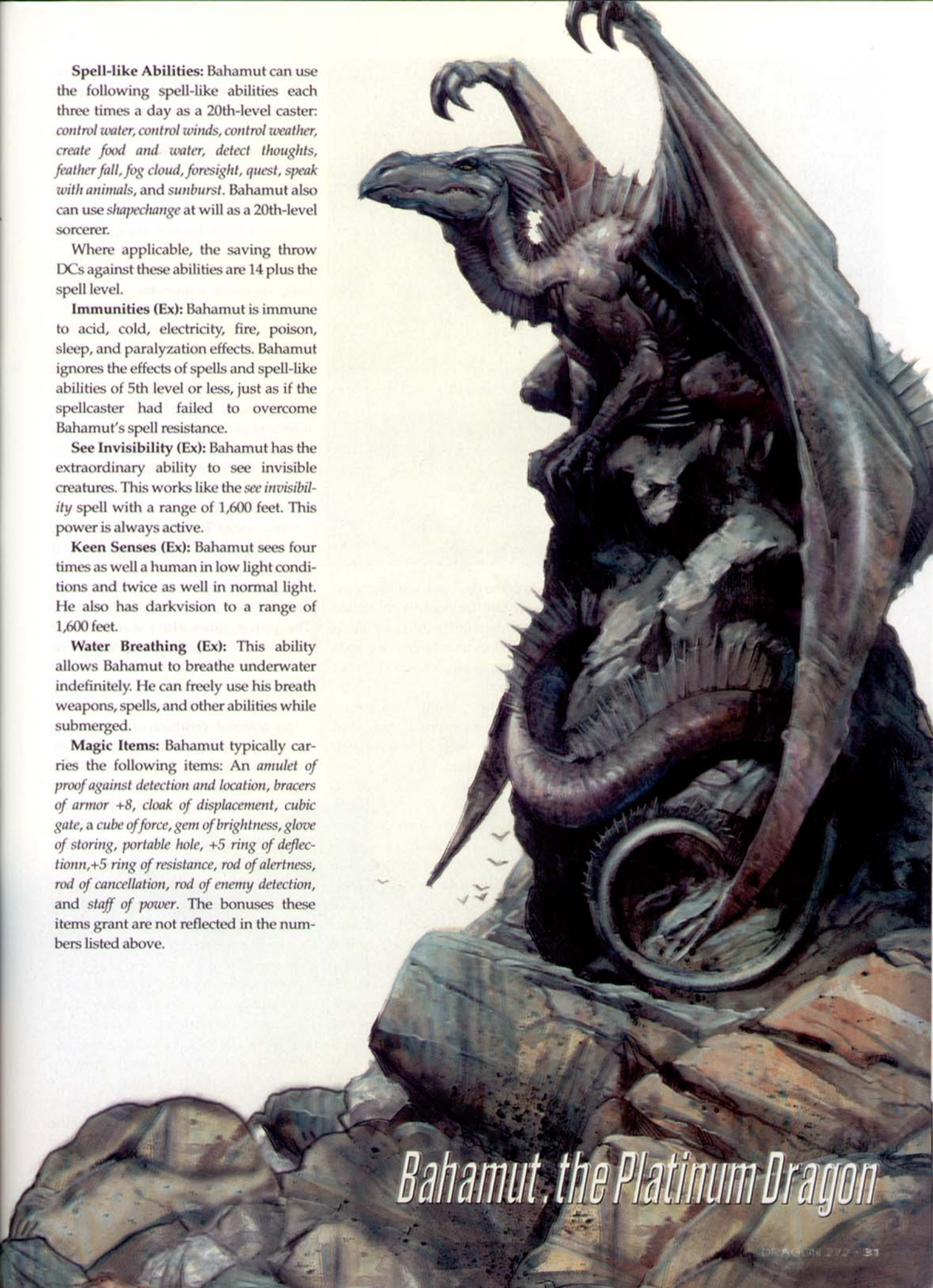
Immunities (Ex): Bahamut is immune to acid, cold, electricity, fire, poison, sleep, and paralyzation effects. Bahamut ignores the effects of spells and spell-like abilities of 5th level or less, just as if the spellcaster had failed to overcome Bahamut's spell resistance.

See Invisibility (Ex): Bahamut has the extraordinary ability to see invisible creatures. This works like the *see invisibility* spell with a range of 1,600 feet. This power is always active.

Keen Senses (Ex): Bahamut sees four times as well a human in low light conditions and twice as well in normal light. He also has darkvision to a range of 1,600 feet.

Water Breathing (Ex): This ability allows Bahamut to breathe underwater indefinitely. He can freely use his breath weapons, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

Magic Items: Bahamut typically carries the following items: An *amulet of proof against detection and location, bracers of armor +8, cloak of displacement, cubic gate*, a *cube of force, gem of brightness, glove of storing, portable hole, +5 ring of deflectionn,+5 ring of resistance, rod of alertness, rod of cancellation, rod of enemy detection*, and *staff of power*. The bonuses these items grant are not reflected in the numbers listed above.



Bahamut, the Platinum Dragon

Tiamat

Colossal Dragon

Hit Dice: 49d12+588 (906 hp)
Initiative: +4 (Improved Initiative)
Speed: 40 ft., Fl 150 ft. (clumsy), Sw 40 ft.
AC: 50 (–8 size, +48 natural)
Attacks: 5 bites, +60 melee;
2 wings, +55 melee; sting, +55 melee
Damage: Bite, 4d6+19; wing, 2d8+9; sting, 4d6+9 plus poison
Face/Reach: 15 ft. by 40 ft./15 ft
Special Attacks: Breath weapons, frightful presence, sound imitation, spells, spell-like abilities
Special Defenses: Scent, spell resistance 30, damage reduction (25/+4), immunities, *see invisibility*, keen senses, *water breathing*
Saves: Fort +39, Ref +27, Will +34
Abilities: Str 49, Dex 10, Con 35, Int 28, Wis 25, Cha 28
Skills: Alchemy +35, Bluff +61, Concentration +63, Diplomacy +61, Gather Information +59, Intimidate +61, Knowledge (arcana) +31, Knowledge (dragonkind) +34, Knowledge (history) +31, Knowledge (the planes) +31, Knowledge (religion) +31, Listen +61, Scry +61, Search +61, Sense Motive +59, Spellcraft +61, Spot +61, Wilderness Lore +33
Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Hover, Improved Critical (Bite), Improved Initiative, Expertise, Fly-By Attack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-like Ability (*domination*), Snatch, Wingover
Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground
Organization: Solitary (1), Troupe (Tiamat and 1d6 chromatic dragons, of age categories 1d8+4)
Challenge Level: 25 (solitary)
Treasure: When traveling, Tiamat carries her magic items and 2d12+2 gems of various sizes. Tiamat's lair contains 2d4 level 20 treasures.
Alignment: Always lawful evil
Advancement Range: N/A

Tiamat is also known as the Chromatic Dragon and the Queen of the Evil Dragons. Like her arch-rival, Bahamut, she is revered as a deity in many locales. All evil dragons pay homage to Tiamat; green and blue dragons acknowledge her sovereignty the most readily. Good dragons have a healthy respect for Tiamat, though they usually take care not to mention her or even think about her at all.

In her natural form, Tiamat is a thick-bodied dragon with five heads and a wyvern's tail. Each head is a different color: white, black, green, blue, and red. Her massive body is striped in those colors.

Tiamat dwells in the upper reaches of Baator, where she rules a realm populated mainly by dragons, other scaly creatures of diverse types, and an assortment of devils (particularly the abishai devils, who resemble evil dragons). Tiamat's consorts include great wyrm dragons of the white, black, green, blue, and red types.

Tiamat is very active in the world. She usually travels in the guise of a bewitching human or elven female. Several evil dragons of various types either accompany her in disguise or lurk out of sight nearby. Tiamat constantly seeks to extend the power and dominion of evil dragons over the land, particularly when her subjects find themselves embroiled in territorial disputes with good dragons. Tiamat also unfailingly demands reverence, homage, and tribute from her subjects.

Tiamat speaks many languages, including Draconic, Infernal, Ignan, and Common, though she can converse with any intelligent creature.

Combat

Tiamat can literally lay waste to large tracts of countryside if she has a mind to do so. She is shrewd enough to capture foes when she can, holding them for ransom, interrogation, or both. Tiamat loves physical combat and assumes her natural form to close to melee if possible. She can bite with all her heads, even if she moves or charges during a round. Instead of biting, each head can use a breath weapon or a spell-like ability as a standard action. Tiamat can cast one spell each round, which counts as a standard action for one of her heads.

It is possible, though not easy, to sever Tiamat's heads in much the same way one can sever a hydra's head. Severing a head requires a slashing weapon. If the blow inflicts at least 185 points of damage, the head is severed.

Breath Weapons (Su): Each of Tiamat's five heads produces a different breath weapon, as follows:

White: A cone of cold 70 feet long; creatures within the cone suffer 12d6 points of cold damage.

Black: A line of acid 5 feet high, 5 feet wide, and 140 feet long; creatures within the area of effect suffer 24d4 points of acid damage.

Green: A cone of corrosive gas 70 feet long; creatures within the cone suffer 24d6 points of acid damage.

Blue: A line of lightning 5 feet high, 5 feet wide, and 140 feet long; creatures within the area of effect suffer 24d8 points of electrical damage.

Red: A cone of fire 70 feet long; creatures within the cone suffer 24d10 points of fire damage.

Each of Tiamat's breath weapons allow a Reflex saving throw vs. DC 46 for half damage.

Once one of Tiamat's heads breathes, the head must wait 1d4 rounds before it can breathe again.

Frightful Presence (Ex): Tiamat can unsettle foes with her mere presence. The power takes effect automatically whenever Tiamat attacks, charges, or flies overhead. Creatures within a radius of 450 feet are subject to the effect if they have 48 or fewer Hit Dice.

An affected creature can resist the effects by making a successful Will saving throw vs. DC 43. A successful saving throw makes a creature immune to Tiamat's frightful presence for one day. Creatures with 4 Hit Dice or fewer become panicked for 4d6 rounds if they fail their saving throw. Creatures with 5 or more Hit Dice become shaken for 4d6 rounds if they fail their saving throw. Evil dragons (and Bahamut) ignore the effects of Tiamat's frightful presence.

Sound Imitation (Ex): This extraordinary ability allows Tiamat to mimic any voice or sound she has heard at any time she likes. Listeners can detect the ruse with a successful Will saving throw vs. DC 43.

Spells: Tiamat is a 20th-level sorcerer and a 20th-level cleric with access to the Evil and Law domains. (Tiamat also gains the granted powers associated with those domains.) In her natural form, Tiamat can cast her spells with but a word.

Spell-like Abilities: Tiamat can use the following spell-like abilities each three times a day as a 20th-level caster: *command plants, control weather, darkness, domination, fog cloud, gust of wind, mirage arcana, plant growth, suggestion, summon swarm, veil*, and *ventriloquism*. She can use the following powers once a day as a 20th-level caster: *eyebite* and *discern location*.

The saving throw DCs for these abilities are 19 plus the spell level.

Tiamat has the ability to *corrupt water* once a day. This ability causes up to 10 cubic feet of water to become stagnant, foul, inert, and unable to support animal life. The ability can spoil magical potions and any other liquid containing water; unattended items are automatically fouled. Items in a creature's possession remain unaffected if the bearer makes a successful Will saving throw vs. DC 43.

Tiamat can *charm* reptiles three times per day. The power operates as a *mass charm* spell (Will saving throw vs. DC 27 negates), but the ability works only on reptilian animals. Tiamat can communicate with any reptiles she has *charmed* as though using a *speak with animals* spell.

Poison (Ex): Creatures Tiamat stings with her tail suffer 3d6 points of temporary Constitution damage unless they make a Fortitude saving throw vs. DC 46. After 1 minute, poisoned creatures must make an additional Fortitude saving throw vs. DC 46 or suffer an additional 3d6 points of Constitution damage.

Water Breathing (Ex): This extraordinary ability allows Tiamat to breathe underwater indefinitely. She can freely use her breath weapons, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

Magic Items: Tiamat typically carries the following items: an *amulet of the planes, +8 bracers of armor, carpet of flying* (6 ft. by 9 ft.), *cloak of displacement, crystal ball* with *detect thoughts, darkskull, iron bands of Bilarro, iron flask* (empty), *orb of storms, portable hole +5, ring of deflection, +5 ring of resistance, rod of rulership*, and *rod of splendor*. The bonuses these items grant are not reflected in the numbers listed above.

Tiamat, The Chromatic Dragon

As you can see, the new D&D game offers a wealth of detail. Most of it will be familiar to veteran players, but here are brief explanations of selected terms:

Size and Type: This line begins with the creature's size category—"Colossal" is the top category, used for creatures more than 64 feet long and weighing more than 250,000 pounds. A creature's size affects its combat abilities.

Type determines how magic affects the creature; for example, the *hold animal* spell affects only Animal type creatures. Type also determines many characteristics, including Hit Dice, attack modifiers, saving throws, and skills.

Hit Dice: A parenthetical listing of the creature's average hit points follows the Hit Dice listing.

Initiative: A parenthetical note shows where the bonuses come from.

Speed: This line replaces the old movement entry. It gives the creature's land speed (the distance it can cover in one move).

Fly: All flying speeds include a maneuverability rating, as follows:

Perfect: The creature can perform almost any aerial maneuver.

Good: The creature is very agile in the air (like a housefly or hummingbird).

Average: The creature can fly as adroitly as small bird.

Poor: The creature flies as well as a very large bird.

Clumsy: The creature can barely fly at all.

Armor Class: This line gives the creature's Armor Class for normal combat. To compare the Armor Classes listed to the AD&D® rules, subtract 20 and change the sign. So Tiamat would have an AC of –30 in the old game.

Attacks: This line gives all the creature's physical attacks. The number of attacks is given along with the weapon used along with the attack bonus and the type of attack (melee or ranged). Creatures attack by rolling 1d20. If the attack roll plus the attack bonus equals or exceeds the Armor Class, the attack hits. The attack bonus includes adjustments for size, Strength, and other factors.

Damage: The listing includes adjustments for Strength.

Face/Reach: The numbers before the slash show how much space the creature needs to fight, width first, length second. The number after the slash is the creature's reach.

Special Attacks: This line lists all the creature's special attacks in the order they are most likely to be used.

Special attacks are Extraordinary (Ex), Spell-like (Sp), or Supernatural (Su).

Extraordinary abilities are nonmagical, don't go away in an antimagic field, and are not subject to anything that disrupts magic; using an extraordinary attack is a free action unless noted otherwise.

Spell-like abilities are magical and work just like spells (though they are not spells and have no verbal, somatic, or material components). They go away in an antimagic field and are subject to spell resistance.

Supernatural abilities are magical and go away in an antimagic field but are not subject to spell resistance. Using a supernatural ability is standard action unless noted otherwise. Supernatural abilities will have a daily use limit or can be used at will, just as spell-like abilities are.

Breath Weapon (Su): A dragon's breath weapon is usable once every 1d4 rounds. Cone shaped breath weapons are as high and wide as the distance from the dragon's mouth.

Frightful Presence (Ex): This power makes the creature's presence unsettling to foes. Shaken creatures suffer a –2 penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, and checks.

Panicked creatures run away from the source of their fear as quickly as they can. Other than running away from the source, their path is random. They have a 50% chance to drop what they are holding, and they flee from all other dangers that confront them rather than facing them. Panicked characters who are prevented from fleeing cower instead.

Poison (Ex): Creatures subjected to poison must make an immediate saving throw or suffer the venom's effects. Sometime later (usually 1 minute), a poisoned creature must make a second saving throw (even if the first one was successful) or suffer an additional effect.

Most poisons inflict temporary ability score damage. Temporary ability score damage returns at the rate of 1 point per day.

Special Defenses: This line lists all the creature's special defenses in the order they are most likely to be used.

Special defenses are Extraordinary (Ex), Spell-like (Sp), or Supernatural (Su), just as special attacks are.

Scent (Ex): The creature can detect other creatures by smell within a 30 foot radius.

Spell Resistance (Ex): Replaces magic resistance from earlier versions of the game. A spell or spell-like ability cannot affect the creature unless the caster rolls the spell resistance number on 1d20 plus the caster's level.

Damage Reduction: Damage from any physical attack (not a magical or energy attack) is reduced by the number before the slash. So if a fire giant smacks Bahamut for 35 points of damage, Bahamut suffers only 10 points of damage. The number after the slash shows the type of weapon that negates the damage reduction. If the giant in our example were using a +4 weapon, Bahamut would have suffered all 35 points from the blow. Creatures that have damage reduction inflict full damage on other creatures that are vulnerable to the same or weaker type of weapon, so Bahamut and Tiamat inflict full damage on each other.

Saves: Creatures have a bonus or penalty that applies to their saving throw rolls. To succeed, a saving throw result has to equal or exceed the saving throw's Difficulty Class, which starts at 10 and goes up, just as Armor Classes do.

There are now only three categories of saving throws: Fortitude (for things that affect the body or the life force), Reflex (for blasts and other area effects), and Will (for assaults on the mind).

Abilities: Creatures now have the same six ability scores that characters do.

Skills: Similar to proficiencies in the AD&D 2nd Edition game. Skill checks use a difficulty class system similar to the one described for saving throws.

Feats: Special powers, somewhat like skills. Note that certain feats presented here (Hover, Flyby Attack, Quicken Spell-like Ability, Snatch, and Wingover) are specific to monsters. These feats are not found in the *Player's Handbook*, but they are described in the new *Monster Manual*.

Skip's primary contribution to the new D&D game has been designing the new versions of the monsters, so don't expect any mercy.

PC Portraits

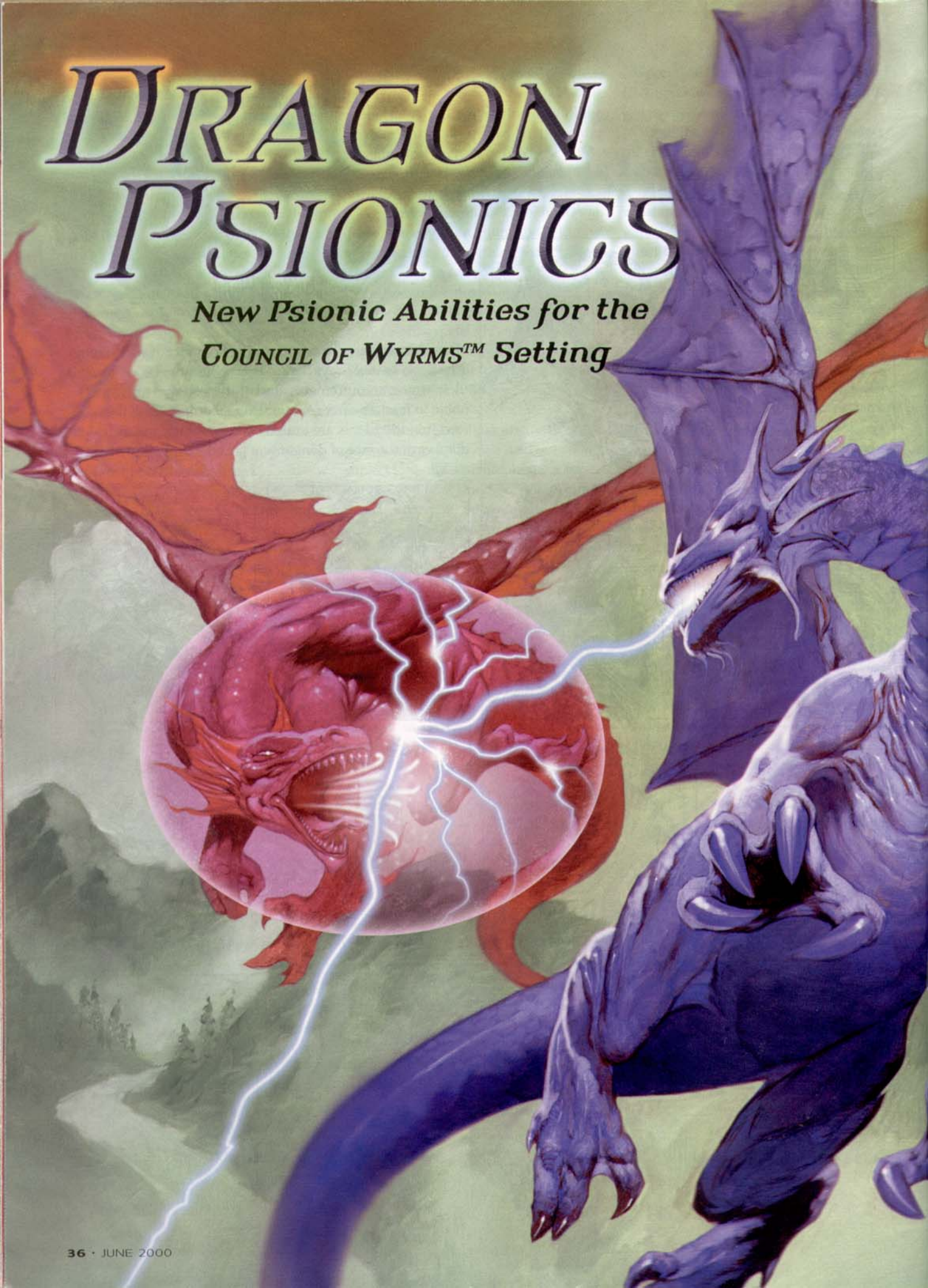
Dragonriders

by Sam Wood

"Dragonriders are the best of the best—a fact of which they are all too aware!" says Sam. "Their elite status is reflected in their armor, accoutrements, and attitude. From arrogant noble to fearless career soldier to crazed daredevil, these forceful individuals are united by the courage and flair they display in the face of danger."

Dragon Psionics

New Psionic Abilities for the Council of Wyrms™ Setting



by Ed Bonny

illustrated by Jeff Miracola

The great gem dragons who inhabit the island chain known as Io's Blood could arguably be called the most powerful and versatile of all dragonkind. Possessed of both magical and priestly spells like their chromatic and metallic counterparts, the neutral gem dragons are fortunate to be blessed with yet a third set of unique virtues: the potent power of psionics. These fantastic mental abilities ensure that the gem dragons will always be a force to contend with in the often hostile world of Io's Blood.

Here are new psionic powers for gem dragon characters from Io's Blood in the COUNCIL OF WYRMS™ campaign setting. Rules for dragon psionicist PCs are covered in the COUNCIL OF WYRMS reference book. The psionic powers in this article are presented in the format described in *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Skills & Powers*. DMs can easily convert these abilities to conform to the original rules for psionics from *The Complete Psionics Handbook*.

On many worlds, enterprising dragons research new spells to suit their particular needs. It should then come as no surprise that gem dragons perform their own research, creating new psionic abilities unique to their kind. Each dragon psionicist has its own reason for creating new psionics. Some seek greater personal power or to empower their clan further. Others develop new psionics purely for the thrill of success, while others pursue such research simply for the sake of knowledge.

Many of the following new psionic abilities are highly specialized and can be learned only by dragons. It is possible that non-draconic psionicists could first learn and then modify these powers to suit their own purposes.

All Gem Dragons

In addition to the psionic powers appearing in this article that are unique to certain sub-races of gem dragons, all gem dragons have access to the two new psionic abilities presented below. Obviously, not all clans possess all available psionics. Some clans foolishly reject new psionic powers, while other clans actively seek them. Acquisition can range from trading psionic secrets between clans to theft of a coveted new ability. Creative DMs and players can carefully match psionics to a particular gem dragon individual or dragon clan based on personal motivation, clan politics, and other pertinent variables.

Clan-link

(Telepathic science)
MAC: 7
PSP Cost: Special
Range: Unlimited
Area of Effect: One dragon clan
Prerequisite: *mindlink*, 12th age level

This science can be learned only by great wyrms (and usually only clan leaders), and it gives a gem dragon the ability to instantly make telepathic contact with all gem dragons of his clan. The cost of this power varies with the number of dragons contacted (2 PSPs per dragon brought into the *clan-link* per round). The cost for failure is equal to half the cost for maintaining the power. The psionicist cannot select which dragons are affected by this psionic power, as the power targets all dragons of the same clan. However, a dragon can refuse to join the *link* when so contacted.

Any dragon affected by *clan-link* can communicate instantly and telepathically with any other *linked* clan member via the initiating psionicist. Mental discussion takes place in real time as if all participants were actually conversing physically with each other. A dragon can free himself from a *clan-link* merely by thinking himself out of the *link*. Once out of the current *clan-link*, the dragon cannot re-enter unless the initiating dragon stops and begins the *link* anew. Gem dragons use this special psionic ability for a variety of purposes, from discussing a clan matter to sounding the alarm for an emergency.

Sensitivity to Draconic Presence

(Clairsentient devotion)
MAC: 6
PSP Cost: 10/3
Range: 50 yards
Area of Effect: Personal
Prerequisite: None

By means of this psionic devotion, a psionicist is alerted to the presence of any dragon or dragon-kin, including undead dragons, within range. In the first round, the dragon learns only the number of dragons present. With each additional round of concentration, the psionicist can discern the location, color,

and approximate age of any one random dragon that the power initially uncovered. This ability even reveals those dragons hidden by psionic or magical means to the psionicist, such as a dragon shapechanged into a demihuman. If no dragon or dragon-kin is in the area, the psionicist simply receives no mental impressions.

Amethyst

One of the amethyst dragons' secret activities that many suspect but few truly concern themselves over is their incessant spying. To keep as harmonic a balance as possible across the islands of Io's Blood, amethyst dragons are ever alert for new developments that could spell the end of the uneasy peace all dragons enjoy. When applying this philosophy to the other gem dragons, the amethyst dragons watch for the appearance of new and potentially disruptive psionic powers. Both the psionicist and the new power are fully investigated before any action is taken. Note that amethyst dragons almost always take action to keep the balance. To the amethyst dragons, a tyranny of law or chaos is equally as terrible for dragonkind as one of pure good or evil.

Breath Swap

(Psychometabolic devotion)
MAC: 6
PSP Cost: 10/5
Range: 300 yards
Area of Effect: One dragon
Prerequisite: 5th age level

Amethyst dragon psionicists developed this power to deny an attacking dragon the use of her terrible breath weapon. A successful use of *breath swap* temporarily exchanges the psionicist's breath weapon with the breath weapon of the psionicist's target. Secure in the knowledge that they are immune to the damaging forces of their own breath weapon, amethyst dragons employing this science need not fear the breath attacks of a targeted enemy. The targeted dragon is not aware that she possesses the psionicist's breath weapon until she employs a breath attack. Strategic use of this power often surprises an enemy dragon who believes her breath weapon is functioning normally.

Breath Shield

(Psychokinetic devotion)
MAC: 7
PSP Cost: 12/6
Range: 0
Area of Effect: Personal
Prerequisite: *inertial barrier, telekinesis*

Amethyst dragons fiercely guard this psionic science, revealing its existence to no one and using it only in the most dire of circumstances. They rightly fear that should knowledge of this power become known to the rest of dragon-kind, they would become the enemies of all the dragons of Io's Blood. *Breath shield* creates a movable and invisible barrier that completely surrounds the dragon psionicist as would an *inertial barrier.* Once erected, the *breath shield* completely keeps out any and all draconic breath weapons that would normally come into contact with the psionicist. Anyone in physical contact with the psionicist is also protected by the *breath shield.*

Sapphire

In general, the warlike sapphire dragons discourage psionicists as a class. Sapphire dragons believe that they were given a good balance of wizardly, priestly, and psionic powers. To forsake most of these abilities solely to focus on just one is a great loss to any potential warrior. However, there are always those few headstrong sapphire dragons who follow their hearts and become psionicists. These psionicists are encouraged to continue in a militant fashion and thus still keep up their responsibility to the security of their clan. Because of this, sapphire psionicists tend to create psionic powers that enhance fighting prowess. Persistent and disturbing rumors speak of a psionicist from Clan Boldtail who has created a psionic science that can drastically lower an enemy dragon's resistance to magic.

Increased Maneuverability

(Psychometabolic devotion)
MAC: 8
PSP Cost: 4/2
Range: 0
Area of Effect: Personal
Prerequisite: None

Ever the strategic-minded warriors, the sapphire dragons of Clan Battlecry developed this psionic power to give their clan an advantage in aerial combat against the ever-looming threat of the red dragon clans. This devotion provided a much needed tactical advantage against the superior reds, so Clan Battlecry shared it with the other sapphire dragon clans. When flying, *increased maneuverability* improves the dragon's maneuverability class by one.

Emerald

Aloof yet fascinated with the world around them, emerald dragons actively choose to be spectators to the events occurring in and about Io's Blood. In peacetime, their psionic powers enable them to explore the world without interacting with it. In wartime, they use their powers to repel threats from their lands. Emerald dragon psionicists prefer to research powers that serve both these purposes, thus satisfying their curious nature while protecting them from enemies.

Perch

(Psychokinetic devotion)
MAC: 8
PSP Cost: 6/3
Range: 500 yards
Area of Effect: Personal
Prerequisite: *telekinesis*

This psionic power was initially designed to function as a sort of observatory for emerald dragons. It has since been to put to many other uses. When employing *perch,* the psionicist creates a cylindrical, branchlike perch made of immovable, solid force suspended in mid-air. The psionicist simply wills the *perch* into existence anywhere within range at a fixed location, and it remains there as long as the power is maintained. The *perch* is invisible to all but the psionicist, although magical and psionic means will reveal its presence. At all times, the psionicist is mentally aware of the *perch's* precise location, and only he can land on it as the *perch* is attuned solely to the psionicist's physical form. A dragon psionicist seeking to alight on a *perch* in combat must possess the Stall proficiency to do so successfully.

This psionic ability is extremely useful in air combat, since it offers the dragon the ability to come to a complete stop at nearly any altitude. The creative strategic uses of *perch* are many. In the past,

emerald dragons have used *perches* to appear to halt in mid-flight and startle pursuing dragons with a sudden about-face assault. As mentioned above, emerald dragons prefer to use *perch* to sit high above foreign domains for reconnaissance with little chance of being observed from below. Emerald dragons seriously injured in flight have also employed *perch* to prevent potentially fatal falls.

Topaz

Io's Blood is no paradise in the minds of the topaz dragons. To these reclusive wyrms, the chromatic and metallic dragons seem to be an ever encroaching menace on the horizon. Be they golds and silvers or reds and blues, topaz dragons see only intrusive draconic forces intent on world domination. Topaz dragons have been known to sometimes suspect even the intentions of the other gem dragons from time to time. Accordingly, they use their psionic powers to gather intelligence on all their neighbors regardless of whether they are friend or foe. Knowledge has become the means to keep the outside world out and their underwater homes safe. To this end, topaz dragons happily welcome and nurture any of their kin who seek the path of the psionicist. To count members of such great mental skill among their clans is both a comfort and a source of confidence to the topaz dragons.

Xenophobia

(Telepathic science)
MAC: 6
PSP Cost: 14/7
Range: Touch
Area of Effect: Individual
Prerequisite: *mindlink*, 6th age level

Since the telepathic psionic arts are denied most topaz dragons, only their dragon psionicists are able to learn *xenophobia*. This powerful Telepathic science was developed by a long-forgotten great wyrm of the Deepwater Clan and has since slowly spread to the other topaz clans. The target of this science is at once struck with deeply intense *xenophobic* feelings. Immediately, the affected dragon flees at its fastest rate from her current location and returns as quickly as possible to her clan-home for as long as the power is maintained. This power has no affect on dragons who are already on their clan's homeland.

While the immediate effect of *xenophobia* lasts only as long as the psionicist maintains the power, it is believed in some instances that *xenophobia* can sometimes have a long lasting psychological impact on some dragons. A few dragons affected by this power were rumored to spend decades or centuries in seclusion, not daring to venture forth from the safety of their lairs except in dire circumstances. Whether this is true or not is debatable, but there is no doubt that these rumors keep the enemies of the topaz dragons at bay.

Crystal

For crystal dragons, the frivolous pursuit of knowledge is simply not worth the bother. A dragon's time is much better spent in leisure and amusement. It is best to leave the mundane tasks of research to their kindred. In spite of this prevailing lackadaisical attitude, crystal dragon psionicists do arise from time to time. These psionicists are ignored by most of the clan who see psionicists (and wizards and clerics, too) as spoilsports who take themselves too seriously. But if not for the work of the few serious crystal dragons, there might not be any more crystal dragons left on Io's Blood.

Choke Breath

(Psychometabolic devotion)
MAC: 6
PSP Cost: 12/6
Range: 200 yards
Area of Effect: Individual
Prerequisite: None

A clever psionicist from Clan Moonlight researched this ability centuries ago to prevent the clan's enemies, particularly the cruel white dragons, from inflicting terrible harm on the crystal dragon clans. By use of this devotion, an affected dragon is prevented from using his terrible breath weapon so long as the psionicist maintains the power. The targeted dragon is aware that his breath weapon has been choked off but is not aware of the source of the intervention.

Campaign Notes

All of the gem dragons of Io's Blood guard their psionic secrets well. Each such secret aids in keeping a clan strong and vital. To that end, gem dragons never willingly teach outsiders psionic secrets except under extreme circumstances, such as under the direction of a clan leader.

DMs need not limit gem dragons to the few psionic powers suggested in the *Monstrous Manual*™ book or the Council of Wyrms setting. An excellent online psionic reference, *The Will & The Way*, can be downloaded from the Wizards of the Coast website (www.wizards.com) for use by gem dragons in any setting.

Rumors and Adventure Hooks

- **Treachery!** A spy reports that a chromatic dragon clan has magically enchanted one or more precious gems with the ability to disrupt local psionic activity. Such a gem, if it exists, could put all gem dragons in grave danger. Is this true? Who is responsible? Can more be created? The PC's clan directs the PCs to investigate these rumors and, if they prove to be true, take the necessary action to destroy the knowledge of such dangerous magic forever.
- **Genocide!** A breakaway sect of the Dragon Slayer humans has dedicated itself solely to the eradication of gem dragons. To this end, they have developed an incurable psionic disease that eventually cripples the minds of any psionicist dragon. These humans hope to infect the amethyst dragons first, as they are believed to be the most powerful. How the humans plan on administering this disease to the gem dragon population remains as yet unknown. Perhaps some dragons are already showing signs of this disease? Can a cure be found?
- **The Unknown!** An adventuring kindred returns from the jungle reporting the existence of a new breed of half-dragon that are obviously of gem descent. Could such a half-dragon possess mental powers like its draconic parent? To what uses could the PC's clan put such a psionic ally, even if it is only a demihuman? Can this kind of half-breed even truly exist?
- **Outrage!** A clan has been invaded by a "psionic thief" who somehow snuck into the clan's homeland and stole a precious psionic secret. The clan leader demands action and charges the PCs to capture the thief or at least ensure that the secret is never revealed.
- **Impossible!** At a recent Council meeting, one of the PCs overheard that a psionic gold dragon has hatched. Is this possible? What is the source of such a rumor? What could such a turn of events spell for the gem dragons if they no longer have a monopoly on psionic abilities?

Ed Bonny is a champion of inactive campaign settings, with a particular fondness for the Planescape® and Dark Sun® settings.

MIND BLAST

Trust me, you don't need any knowledge of the Alternity® Game to answer this one. I have an Alternity hero whose name is KARA. Just by knowing her name and profession, you'd know she's an expert in martial arts. So which of the four main professions is Kara: DIPLOMAT, COMBAT SPEC, TECH OP, or FREE AGENT?

You can find the solution to this *Mind Blast* on page 16.

no. 12 SOLUTION

The spells are all missing their Roman numerals (M, D, C, L, X, V, I).
Revealed down are the monsters, SIX KILLER MIMICS.

1				D	U	S	T	D	E	V	I	L			
2	I	N	V	I	S	I	B	I	L	I	T	Y			
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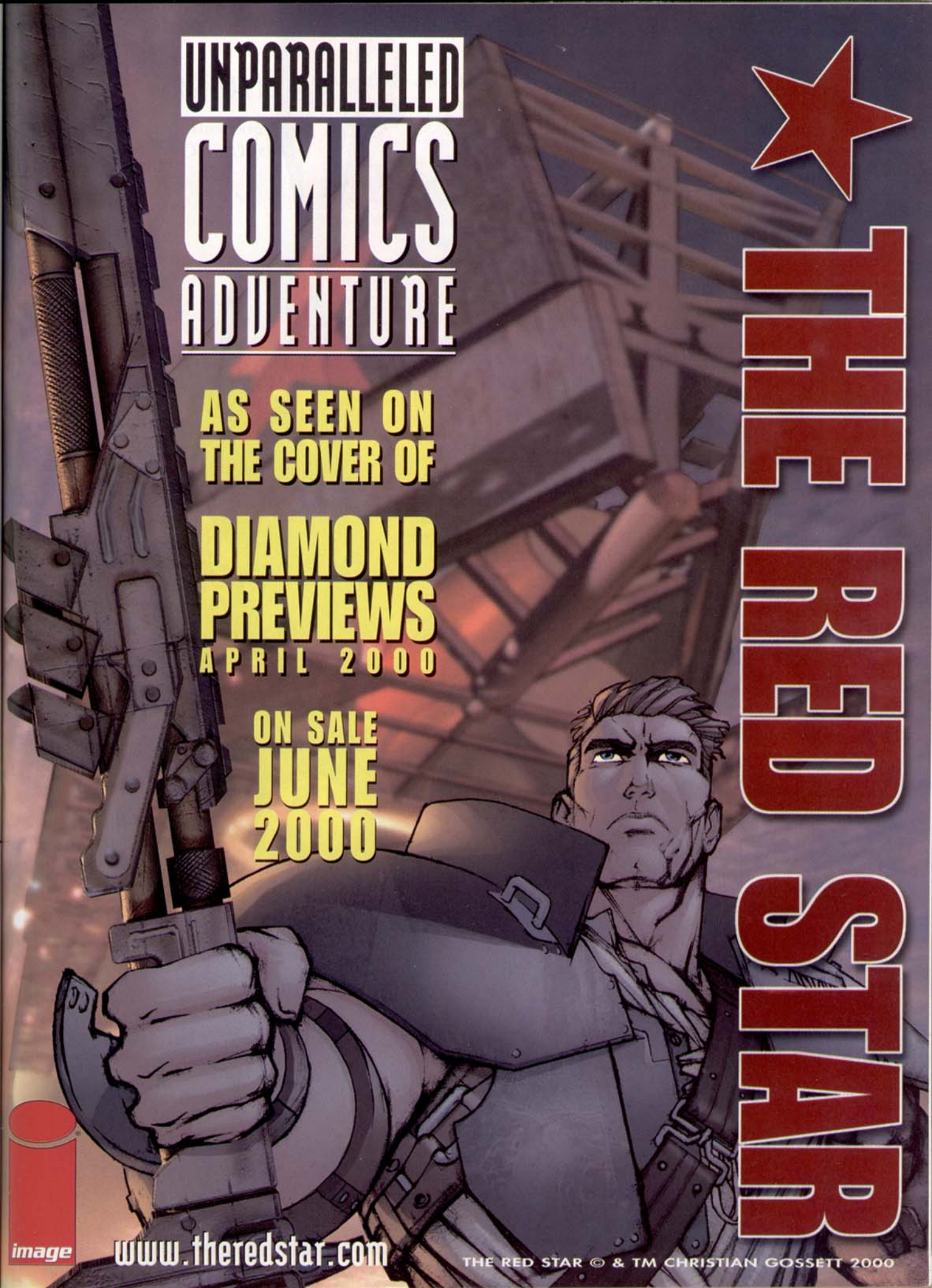
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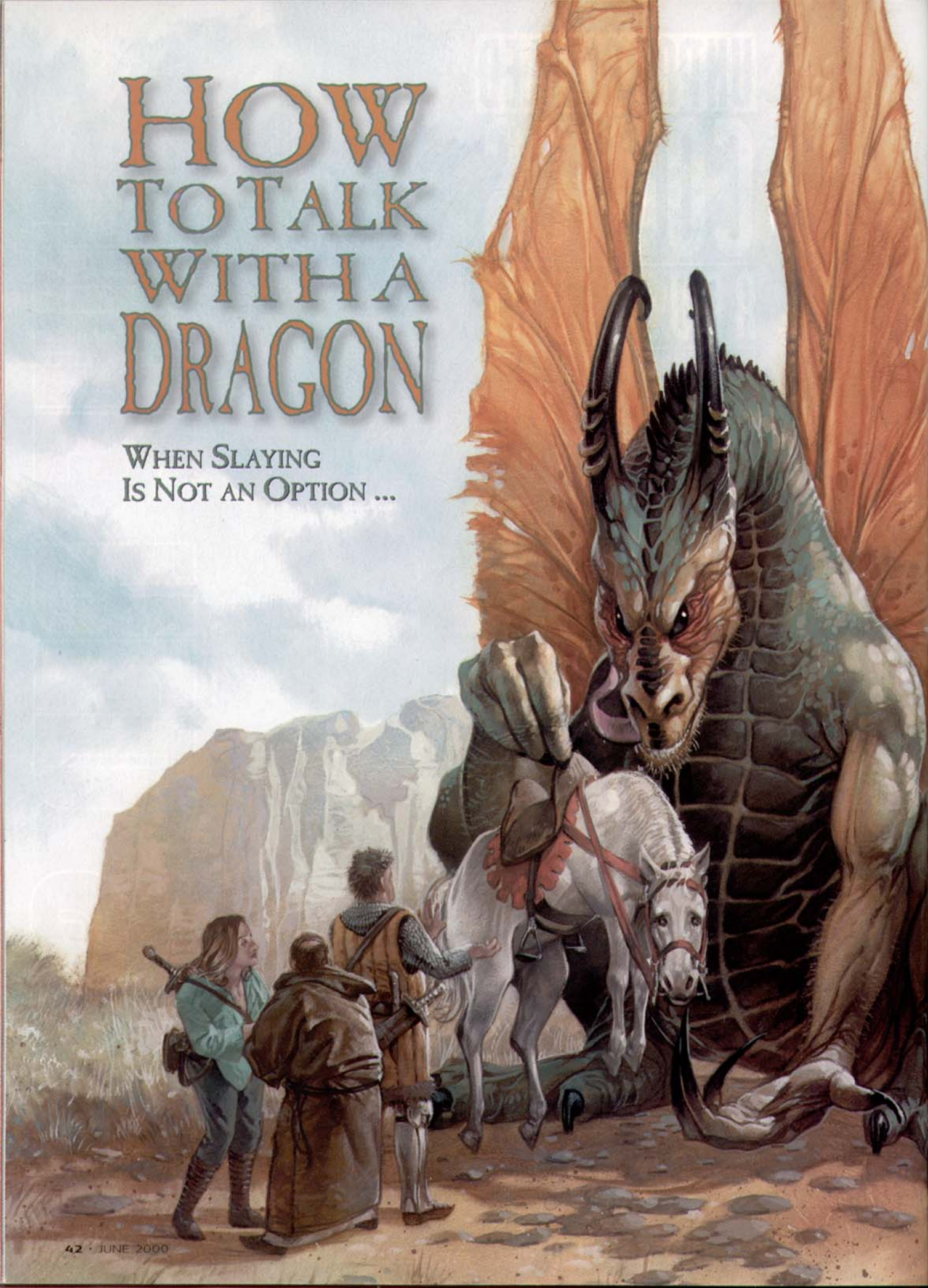
How to Talk with a Dragon

When Slaying Is Not an Option ...



by Robin D. Laws

illustrated by Dave Dorman

It doesn't matter how you got here. The problem is, you're here. Standing unevenly on a heap of glittering coins, glimmering gemstones—and bones. Lots of bones. Some are obviously from the corpses of animals: you see cattle skulls. Other bones are from a variety of creatures with anatomies so exotic you couldn't begin to sort them out. It's the third category of remains that has the cold sweat trickling down your back: The skeletons of humans, elves, gnomes, dwarves, orcs, and other humanoids lay scattered and intermixed with the massive heaps of treasure. The bones have all been gnawed. You pick up a femur. You see the lacerations on the bone, made by a tooth bigger and sharper than the dagger tucked in your boot. You kick at some other nearby bones, struggling to retain your footing atop the shifting pile of coins. You see bones that lie open for the marrow inside.

Something is moving. It's the mountain of coins! Your legs fly out from under you. You're down, amid the gold and bones. You push yourself up on your elbows, struggling to see what's happening around you. Rising up from beneath the pile of treasure is a gigantic form. Coins fall from it, revealing only a single, enormous eye, its diameter greater than your height. It surveys you, unblinking.

It's going to be interesting talking your way out of this one.

Understanding the Dragon Mind

The key to any successful negotiation lies in an understanding of the individual you're dealing with. If you don't know what your interlocutor wants, you can't offer him anything.

Most dragons are driven by four basic impulses: a sense of superiority, a perpetual battle against boredom, bone-bred laziness, and all-consuming greed.

Superiority

Dragons see themselves as the pinnacle of creation. It doesn't matter how often you've saved the world or what degree of divine favor you might enjoy. A dragon thinks of you as nothing more than a tiny speck in the grand scheme of things. A dragon's sense of superiority grows as he does. By the time he's reached his full size, he can't help but conclude that he's bigger, better, and more important than any other creature in his environment. Only when confronted with another, larger dragon will he concede that there's someone grander than himself. And even then he's thinking that when he gets that big and learns that much magic, he'll do things infinitely better.

When you talk to a dragon, always realize that he sees you as his inferior. Any protestations to the contrary on your part elicit anger or amusement, depending on the temperament of the dragon in question. Don't waste your breath trying to convince him you're his equal. You can persuade him that you have a momentary advantage over him—if indeed you do—but that's very different from showing him you're as magnificent as he is.

Boredom

Dragons are like cats. They sleep most of the time, and when they're awake, their attention spans are short. By the time they get big enough to sit atop treasure hoards

When You Assume, You Make Lunch Out of U and Me

This article is full of generalizations. While they're useful—dragon behavior is much less varied than that of, say, humankind—never let prior assumptions substitute for direct observation of your particular situation. Listen carefully to what the dragon says, and watch what she does. She might be a self-styled philosopher uninterested in treasure, an insomniac with a long attention span, or a reincarnated druid who hates flattery. Proceed under the assumption that your dragon behaves typically, while watching for signs of contrary behavior. These signs might include an unusual lair layout or the presence of adoring, nonfearful minions. Listen to the dragon's speech patterns—if she doesn't talk in the usual bombastic, thundering manner, she might differ from the norm.

Alignment makes a big difference in a dragon's typical behavior. A good dragon works harder than an evil one to suppress her urge to cheat or devour you. Still, even virtuous dragons can be arrogant, distrustful, and quick to anger.

Don't Let Him Get to You

Remember that the dragon sees you as a plaything. Never let a dragon see your genuine emotional response to anything he says or does. Don't show him annoyance or anger, and whatever you do, don't let him smell your fear. If he does succeed in provoking a response, he might drop any other agenda to toy with you further.

The dragon sees your emotional make-up as a weakness he can exploit. Evil dragons love to find ways to use your positive impulses against you. They might threaten innocent lives just to test your reaction. Never reveal the identities or locations of friends and loved ones. If things go sour in your deal with a dragon, he might send minions to capture them—or worse.

If you do slip and reveal an emotion, use the dragon's short attention span against him. Think of something new he might want, and dangle an offer in front of him. You have to offer something more interesting than the entertainment he'll get from tormenting you further.

and threaten adventurers' lives, they've lived very long lives. Most stay in their lairs for weeks or months at a time. They think they've seen everything worth seeing and that the parts of the world they haven't seen can't possibly hold anything of interest for them. If you've wandered into a dragon's lair, he probably views you as a momentary source of diversion. Dragons see the rest of creation as a sort of playground. Others exist for their amusement. Unfortunately, dragons quickly grow bored with their new playthings. Think of the way a cat plays with a mouse until he gets tired of the activity and quickly dispatches him. This is what dragons do. You can keep yourself alive for a while by singing, dancing, telling stories, or otherwise entertaining him, but when he starts to yawn, you'd better have something else up your sleeve.

Laziness

Dragons don't sleep all the time out of mere choice. They have to spend most of their time resting. Their huge bodies demand tremendous amounts of energy. Increased activity means dramatically higher food needs. A dragon who spent most of her time moving around and doing things would have to eat a large herd of cattle every day. There isn't enough meat in the world to feed all of its dragons if they all decided to live active lives. It's much easier to just eat a little and give in to a ceaseless, overwhelming, almost intoxicating feeling of exhaustion. A dragon learns to calculate her every move according to how much energy she requires. Many activities just aren't worth it. If you want a dragon to accompany you on a crusade or commit herself to an extended round of appearances, you're probably barking up the wrong tree.

When you talk to a dragon, make sure you're not delaying her nap time. Dragons become quite irritable when sleep-deprived—not to mention hungry.

Greed

Few dragons can really explain their obsessive desire to collect as many rare and valuable items in one place as they can, and then sit on them. Those who do try to understand come up with their own answers to the question. One dragon might see his treasure pile as a physical symbol of his supremacy over all other living things. A scholarly dragon might theorize that he and his kin use treasure piles to train themselves as careful egg guardians. Another just knows he likes shiny things. A fourth might pretend he doesn't care about the treasure; it's just the accumulated junk from centuries of adventurers he had to devour.

Don't let any of this fool you. All dragons love treasure! They feel insecure and nervous without it. When robbed, they fly into a rage. It doesn't matter how little of a hoard you take with you when you go. Dragons protect even the tiniest bauble in their collections with the possessive fury other creatures reserve for the safety of their offspring.

Dragons are so reluctant to let go of the things they have that their ability to size up a deal sometimes seems skewed. If you offer to take a hundred of a dragon's gold pieces, invest it in a business, and then come back a year later with two hundred gold pieces, he'll think you're trying to swindle him. He wants to be able to touch and smell his loot at all times. If he did invest in your trading concern, he'd no doubt show up on a weekly basis to hover over the shop, anxiously looking for evidence that you're cheating him. When he drives away all of your customers, he'll have proven himself right and come to you with vengeance on his mind.

When negotiating with a dragon, offer him immediate returns and tangible treasure. Avoid complex agreements and arrangements that require him to trust you for long periods of time. A dragon just can't trust you when you have some of his money.

Someone's at the Top of the Food Chain, and it Isn't You

No matter how charming you are, regardless of how good and altruistic your dragon negotiating partner is, one inescapable fact remains: She's probably thinking that you taste really good. There's just something about humans and their kin that make a dragon's mouth water. Some dragons claim that the rich, complex diet of civilized folks makes each of them a unique flavor experience to explore, like a fine wine. The closer you get to a dragon, the better she can take in your distinctive aroma, savoring your culinary potential. If she's a well-mannered, good-aligned dragon, she realizes it isn't polite to salivate. But even this upstanding draconic citizen can't help but imagine the one, simple gulp it would take to get you into her gullet. When talking to a dragon, always remember that she's suppressing this powerful, instinctive urge to some degree.

Make her task easier. Stand away from her. Bring her food, if possible, to keep her taste buds otherwise occupied. But don't give her bad food; it will just remind her how great you'd taste in comparison. Forget the iron rations!

If she becomes suddenly distracted or confused, or if you wake her up from a long sleep, even a dragon you think of as a friend might instinctively gulp you down. Try not to take it personally.

Creative Groveling

Despite their complete assurance in their superiority over you, dragons rarely object to some well-executed groveling. They know they're better than you are; they want to know if you know it too.

It is difficult to go too far in kowtowing to a dragon. Actually bowing is always a good first step. Remove any headgear you might be wearing—helmets especially—and kneel deep, exposing the back of your neck. By bowing in this manner, you show the dragon that you'd have no chance if he tried to destroy you, and that you therefore have nothing to lose by making yourself even more vulnerable to him.

Because dragons are proud of their size, intelligence, age, and spellcasting ability, you should emphasize your own deficiencies in all of these areas. A sample grovel might go like this:

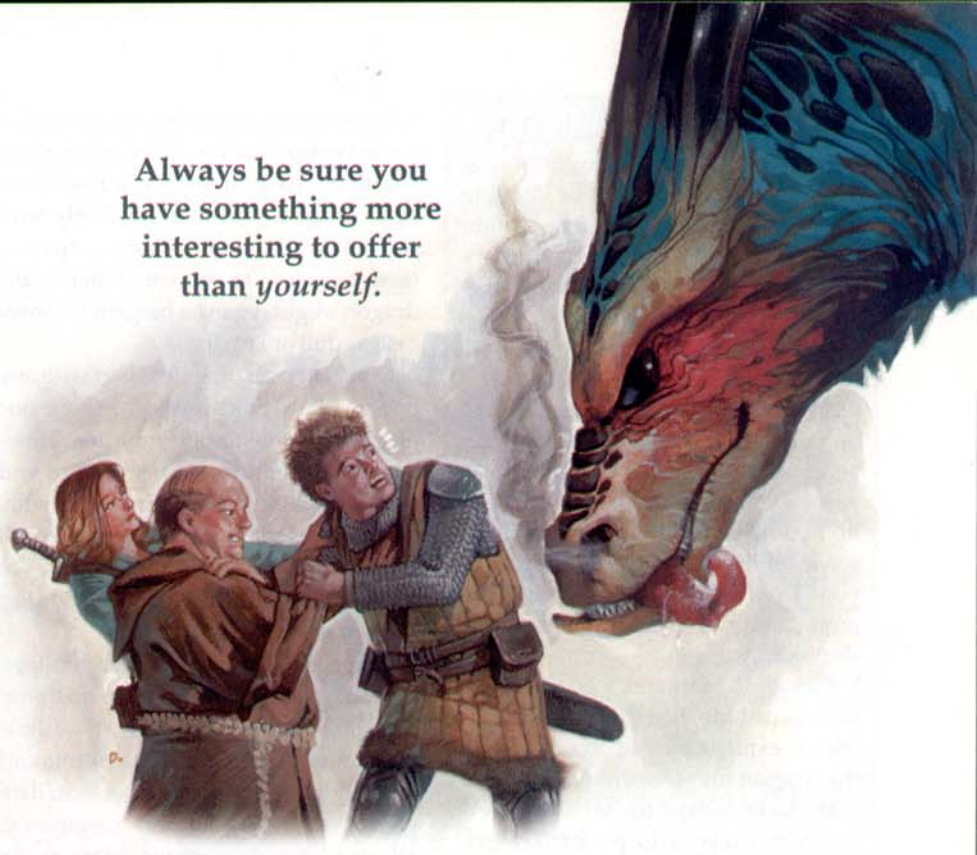
"Oh, mighty dragon, I know that I am but a miserable bug. I know that I am small. My flesh is soft and lacking in protective, iridescent scales. I would be honored to be eaten by you, save that I am not even enough of a morsel to serve as an appetizer. My poor mind, already clouded and weak, is dimmed by the immensity of your presence. Where magical prowess is concerned, I am a mere apprentice, a spent wand, a minnow to your shark. I beg of you to tolerate my bad odor, awful manners, grotesque facial features, grating speaking voice, and poor dress sense."

First written down in the anonymous but influential tome *Memoirs of an Adventurer,* the above has become a widely known standard greeting for use in dragon encounters. The dragon won't penalize your lack of originality. He'll like the idea that you've done your homework and know the right words of respect. Use the standard greeting if words fail you.

"Your Flattery is Not Misplaced, Little One"

Don't let your emphasis on your own failings distract you from the necessity of actively praising the dragon's many positive traits. Unlike the groveling, which can be quickly disposed of during an initial exchange of ritual pleasantries, the flattery should continue throughout the encounter. Pause periodically to reflect on the loveliness of her scales, the rare taste she displays in her choice of treasure, and the dazzling sharpness of her teeth. Praise her assessments of situations as demonstrating penetrating insight. Profess your matchless hatred for things she says she dislikes. Always laugh at the dragon's jokes, even if they're made at your expense.

Always be sure you have something more interesting to offer than *yourself.*



Never directly disagree with a dragon's statement. You might be tempted to say something like: "You're wrong to accuse me of being a liar!" Restrain that impulse. Instead, cloak your disagreement: "You're wise to distrust people, but of course I would never dare lie to you." If stumped for a way to refute a statement without openly gainsaying it, you can always fall back on the old reliable: "Surely you mean to test me, oh great Goldfang; I know that you know the sun rises in the east."

Finding Out What the Dragon Wants

It doesn't matter how well you follow these rules of etiquette if you can't offer the dragon something he wants. You can't simply ask him what you can do for him, either. He'll just ask you to bathe in marinade for a day or two as he searches his cellar for a wine that goes well with adventurer.

Dragons like treasure, food, and power, not necessarily in that order. You have to offer a dragon something extraordinary to get his attention. Dragons consider their time vastly valuable; don't waste it with offers of junk or useless services. Items of treasure must be rarer, more valuable, or of greater novelty value than the items he already has in his collection. Offer him food he has never eaten before, or a gourmet delicacy he has craved ever since he got his first taste of it. If you offer to extend his empire, you must do so to an extent he finds significant.

Although all dragons are interested in the above three things to one degree or another, you'll enjoy a big advantage if you can tailor your offer to the individual dragon's tastes. If you know there's a dragon in a dungeon or wilderness area you plan on exploring, do a little advance research just in case you run into him. If he involves himself in local affairs, find out who his minions are, what sorts of things they typically do, and what they've been doing lately. Deduce from these clues the nature of the dragon's current plans. Be ready with an offer to help him advance them. (This advice doesn't work for everyone; if you're a paladin and the dragon's plans include pillage and slaughter, you won't be able to believably offer to assist him.)

If you find yourself in the lair of a dragon you know nothing about, you might be able to discover his wants by looking around. Check his treasure cache for signs of a collection. If his hoard includes an unusual number of fine statues, you might offer to steal a particularly famous sculpture for him. Likewise, if he's hung his lair with various fine

Your Life: A Bad Bargaining Chip

You can't talk with a dragon for an extended period without having your continued survival called into question. Even a dragon you know well typically thinks nothing of casually threatening your life, just to see how you'll react. It's always a mistake to bargain with your life. The dragon assumes that you'll try to default on your half of the bargain because it was made under duress. Also, when you bargain with your life, you puff up the dragon with a sense of her absolute power over you. The more you want to live, the more tempted she is to hear your death screams.

Bargaining remains a good way to save your hide. Just don't make your life an explicit part of the deal. Ask the dragon for something you really want in exchange for whatever service you propose to perform. Obviously she'll have to let you live to do what she wants. Move the dragon's attention from the fun of killing you to the value of your offer. Never respond directly to a question like, "Why shouldn't I just kill you?" Change the subject instead.

tapestries, you could volunteer to find him another to add to his collection. A library indicates an interest in esoteric knowledge. A lair decorated with an array of torture implements tells you that the dragon is sadistic; he wants new and interesting victims, whether you're inclined to provide them or not. If the lair bustles with the coming and goings of various minions and servitors, the dragon maintains a network of operatives that advance an agenda of some sort. Find out what he uses his network for, and offer to help him.

"Do Any of These Pretty Baubles Catch Your Eye?"

So far we've looked at what you can do for the dragon. Let's think about what she can offer you in return. Even if you don't intend to uphold your bargain, you at least need to formulate a believable request.

The obvious thing a dragon can give you is treasure. Coins remain the best form of loot when you don't trust your bargaining partner. She can claim a false value for gems, or proffer you useless or cursed magical items, but a coin is comparatively easy to test for authenticity. Most dragons part more willingly with coins than the more distinctive items in their hoards. On the other hand, the dragon might regard a bargain for mere cash as dull or tawdry.

Don't expect a dragon to part with any one-of-a-kind relics unless you have one of greater value to offer in trade. However, she might have more potions and scrolls than she knows what to do with. She'll place less value on items she can't use herself, like armor, shields, or weapons. She's less likely to give up rings or wands.

Dragons with henchmen and followers can order their servitors to do things for you. Dragons typically show little concern for the welfare of their minions and might require them to perform dangerous tasks you're too sensible to attempt yourself. Perhaps, mere rooms away in the dungeon, there's a rickety bridge suspended over a river of acid. It might seem cruel to require a dragon's servant to cross it, but she should have known what she was getting into when she signed on as faithful retainer to an overgrown lizard.

Don't overlook information as a thing of value. As ancient and intelligent beings, dragons know all sorts of surprising things. They might have personal memories of historical events otherwise lost to the mists of time. Most own numerous treasure maps marking out the probable location of interesting treasures. Those with networks of spies might know the up-to-date secrets of rival organizations.

Haggling

Beware of contradictory impulses toward haggling. On one hand, dragons love to dicker because it gives them a chance to exercise the intelligence they're so proud of. On the other, they regard your attempts to haggle as unseemly, short-sighted, and downright greedy. Always keep one crucial thought in mind during the heat of a bargaining session: The best deal is one in which you don't get eaten. You're not trying to best the dragon. You're trying to get a reasonable deal while remaining alive. Let the dragon think he's won. Don't badger him over trifling amounts of money. If you show too much concern for the language of the deal, he'll suspect you of trying to build in loopholes to later free you from your obligations to him. Show blithe unconcern for the loopholes he's at the same time setting up for himself. Yes, it's unfair. Like many creatures, dragons love unfairness, provided that it works in their favor.

Fulfilling the Bargain

Once you've made the deal, you must decide whether you intend to keep it or not. Maybe you just wanted to stay alive long enough to get out of the creature's lair. If so, you have to weigh the costs of upholding your end of the bargain against the risks. If you've agreed to do something abhorrent, you probably want to find a way out. Unfulfilled obligations to dragons are dangerous: They hate to be fooled and will go to great lengths to avenge themselves against you. You can always organize an expedition to slay the dragon, using the knowledge of her lair you've gathered from your visit. Needless to say, the dragon has also figured out some things about you and will be prepared for your best tricks. Perhaps trickery is a better solution: After a suitable interval, you can come back to the dragon, claiming to have done the dirty deed. Be warned that dragons usually have magical items that allow them to see through illusions, and they are smart enough to see through obvious tricks. Then there's the ever-present threat that they've been scrying on you....

If you honestly fulfill your end of the bargain, expect the dragon to make at least a token attempt to cheat you. She might provide you with false information or a counterfeit magical item. She might order her servants to betray you instead of completing their promised task. When faced with trickery, be polite but firm. Treat the whole matter as a practical joke. Expose the hoax with a minimum of fanfare. Laugh and then ask for your just reward. The dragon might still try to kill and eat you but is more likely to admire your aplomb and grudgingly accede to your request.

Robin D. Laws never talks to a dragon. Email is much safer.

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Sleeping Dragon Inn

by Dan Bartman

History of the Inn

Set in the middle of the Western Plains, the Sleeping Dragon Inn was built on the site where the elven city of Fey-Aryth once stood. Constructed in one season by two retired dwarven adventurers, Chane Glenshadow and Garron Fledstone, the inn sits at the intersection of two major trade roads.

Before the inn was built, the dwarves were part of an adventuring group that battled Mimikeur, a venerable red dragon, in the fields adjacent to where the inn sits today. The heroes slew the dragon, and to this day, Mimikeur's bones remain preserved in the field west of the inn. Some unknown force or magic has kept them from deteriorating.

The inn has attracted increasing numbers of caravans and adventurers, and its reputation is growing. Within, one finds a comfortable taproom kept warm by everburning torches, open halls, and spacious rooms. Next to the inn stands a stablehouse for the guests' mounts.

Proprietors & Staff

Chane, in his old age, has become a stalwart businessman. Garron's life as a thief has taught him to make money the fast and easy way, and he is not above sheltering thieves and brigands who need a safe place to spend the night—for a fee, of course. The dwarves sell adventuring equipment (no armor or weapons) for low prices, but they lack variety in their inventory. (They have a 20% chance of stocking any mundane item from the *Player's Handbook*, which they sell at the standard *Player's Handbook* price.)

Gib is a gnome engineer and close friend to the dwarves. He often runs the establishment in the dwarves' absence, and they trust him implicitly.

Inn Map Key

Not depicted on the poster map is the inn's wine cellar, accessed via a secret door and staircase on the ground floor, and the stablehouse, which lies west of the main building. These areas are detailed more fully in Dungeon Adventures #81.

A. Taproom
B. Lounge
C. Kitchen
D. Guest Suite
E. Ground Floor Bedrooms
- **E1. Jez's Room**
- **E2. Mara and Valerie's Room**
- **E3. Stump's Room**

F. Second Floor Bedrooms
- **F1. Gib's Room**
- **F2. Veru's Room**
- **F3. Ox's Room**
- **F4–F10. Guest Bedrooms**

G. Chane and Garron's Room
H. Storeroom

Ox, a dimwitted ogre, works as the inn's bouncer. He was saved at a young age by the dwarves and has been following Chane around ever since. He holds the dwarves in the highest esteem and can never be swayed to betray them.

Stump, whose full name is Neruth Smallfellow, is the inn's charismatic halfling chef. The portly chef's specialties include cinnamon boiled grains, salted garlic and butter biscuits, and spiced pork and wild deer entrees.

Veru, the burly human stablehand, maintains a small blacksmithing smelter in the stables. He can repair damaged armor and weapons for a modest fee, of which he keeps a small percentage and gives the rest to the dwarves.

The chambermaids, Valerie, Mara, and Jez, clean the rooms and serve the drinks. Unlike the two snickering girls, Jez is a heavy-set, middle-aged woman of stern disposition. She helps Gib run things when the dwarves are away.

Services

Rooms at the inn cost 5 sp per day (1 gp for the richer suites). These rooms include a bed, footlocker, and dresser.

Gib serves various alcoholic beverages including gnomish whisky, dwarven root ale, and a thick, sweet liquor called Black Pudding. Concocted by Gib, this intoxicative beverage causes a mild spasm after swallowing, but it is otherwise harmless. Green Weed Wine is a family recipe brought to the inn by Stump. This bubbly, pale green wine tastes of peppermint.

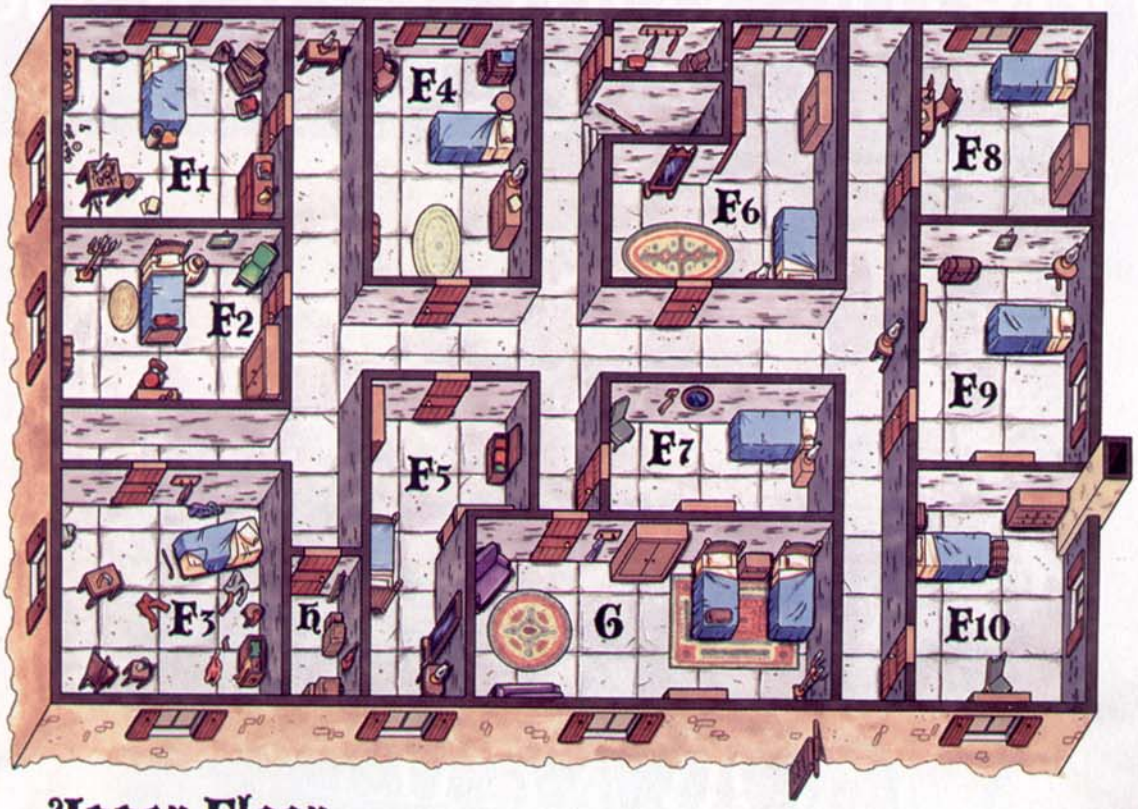
Most of the drinks sell by the tall glass or flagon for 5 cp, but Black Pudding and Green Weed Wine sell for 2 sp per glass. As a safety feature, the flagons and tall glasses of the inn are made from fired clay and shatter if used as weapons.

Horses and other pack animals are cared for at the stables for 5 sp per day. Veru will re-shoe a horse for 1 sp. Saddlebags, new saddles, and saddle blankets are also sold at rates comparable to those in the *Player's Handbook*.

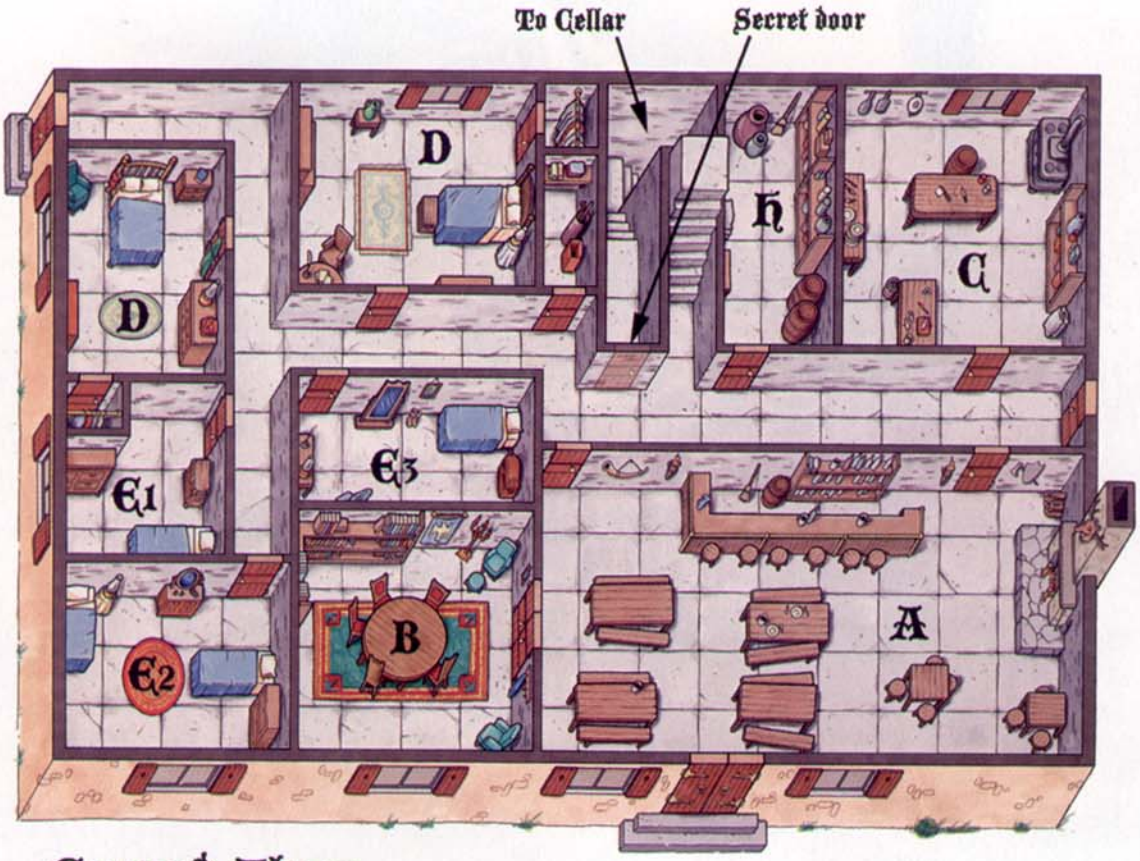
Dan's entry won the Sleeping Dragon Inn Contest in issue #251. Dan would like to thank the members of his game group for their inspiration: Tim, Chris, Damon, Todd, and Chad.

For an adventure set in Dan's Sleeping Dragon Inn, check out James Wyatt's "The Door To Darkness" in DUNGEON® *Adventures #81, on sale this month!*

Poster map by Diesel



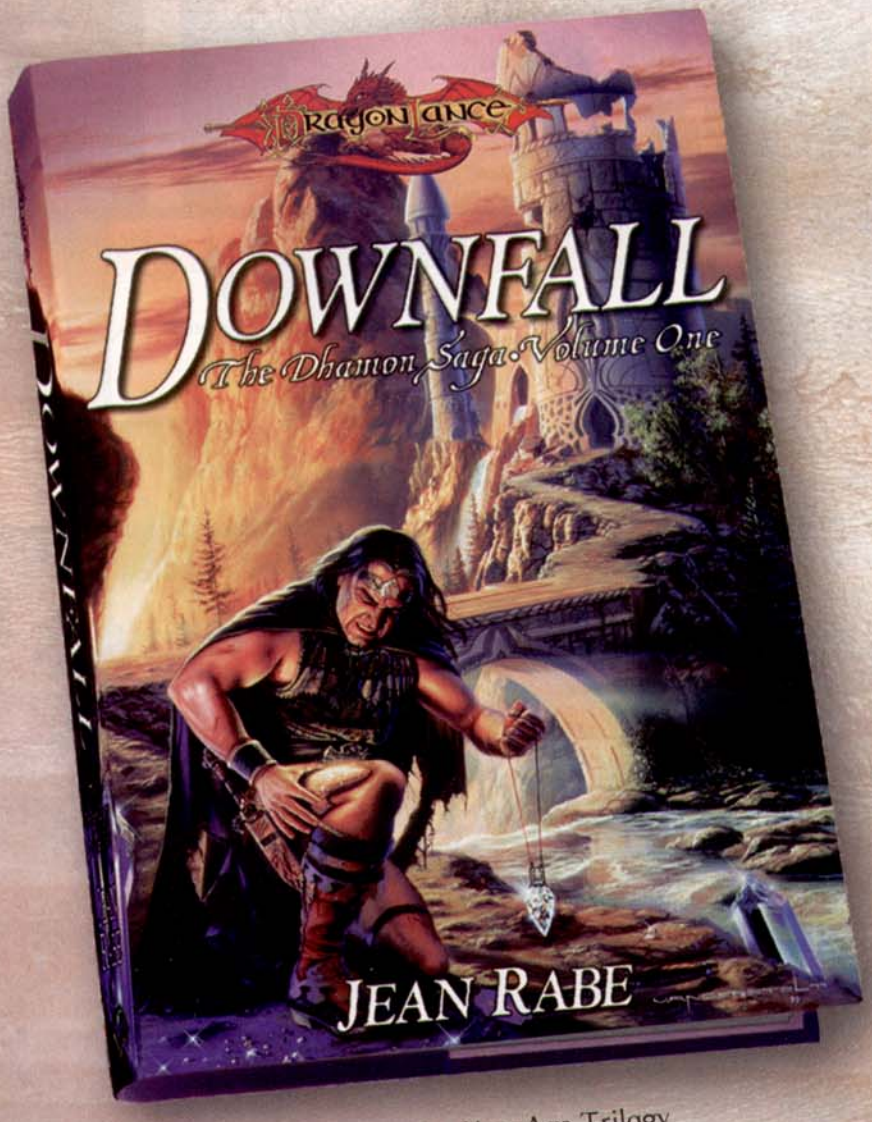
Upper Floor



Ground Floor

Imagine your worst day.

Not even close to what he's going through.



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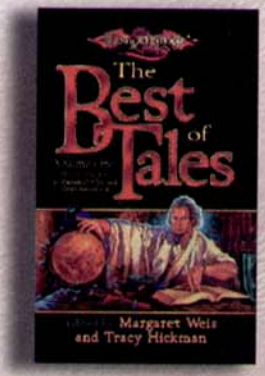

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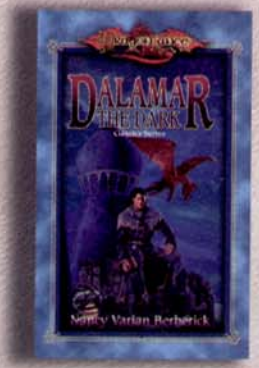

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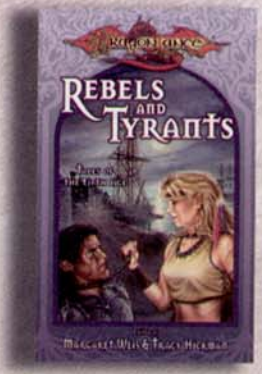

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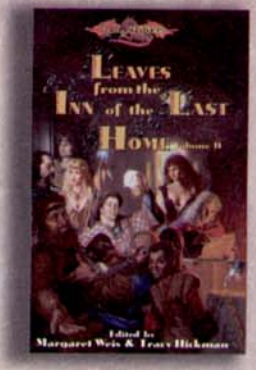

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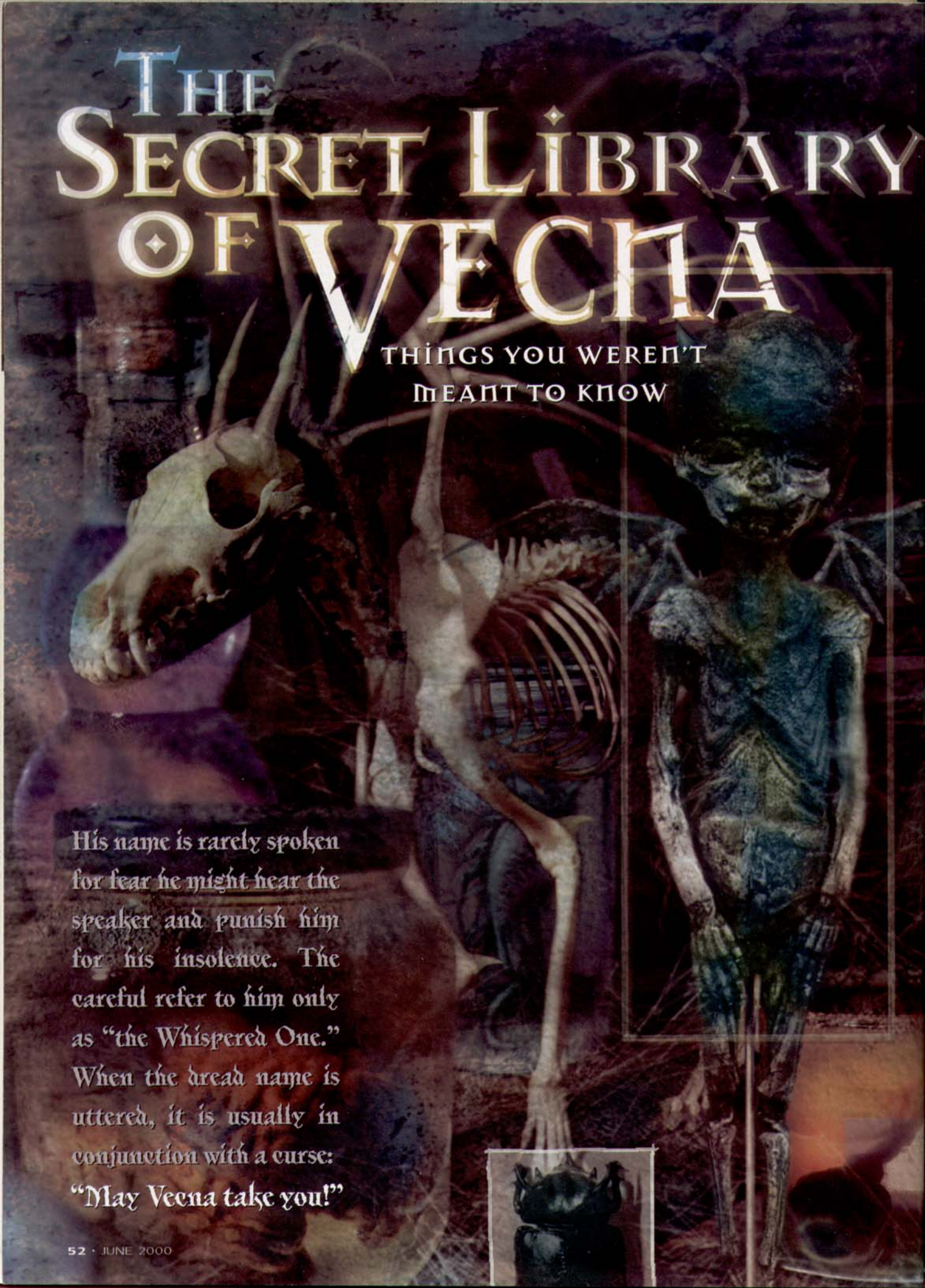
The Secret Library of Vecna

Things You Weren't Meant to Know



His name is rarely spoken for fear he might hear the speaker and punish him for his insolence. The careful refer to him only as "the Whispered One." When the dread name is uttered, it is usually in conjunction with a curse: "May Vecna take you!"

BY STEVE MILLER
ILLUSTRATED BY
MARC SASSO

Vecna is perhaps the most feared demigod in all the Planes. His passion for domination drove him to become the lich-emperor of the greatest evil domain on Oerth, then a demigod bent on destroying the other gods of the GREYHAWK® campaign. In his quest for power, Vecna unlocked the most fundamental secrets of magic and reality, knowledge beyond even that of many gods. But even an omniscient being can be foiled by his own ambition, and so did Vecna's control over Oerth slip through his withered fingers.

On the threshold of victory, Vecna found himself the victim of a power as deep and mysterious as himself: the mysterious dark powers that govern the Demiplane of Dread. Now, trapped within a single avatar and residing in his stronghold, Citadel Cavitius, Vecna plots. He alone has a complete understanding of the forces that have captured him and so many other evil beings, and he is certain that someday he will regain his freedom. While the minions of the Whispered One set his subtle plans into motion, he attends to two schemes: the war against his hated former lieutenant, Kas; and a search for artifacts and tomes that might be used to disrupt his carefully laid plans. The treasures are collected from Oerth, the Demiplane of Dread, and even worlds on which Vecna has never set foot, but where he nonetheless has found beings with dark spirits to do his bidding. Unlike other lords of darkness, Vecna is trapped only in body. He can still project his awareness to the farthest reaches of the Planes while imprisoned within his palace.

When his minions gather interesting items, Vecna has them brought to Cavitius for study. Vulnerable items are destroyed; the rest are stored in his private library, high in one of the palace's many towers.

NEW SPELL

SONG OF THE DEAD

(Necromancy)
(Song)
Level: 2
Range: 60 yards
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 5
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: 30' radius
Saving Throw: Neg.

To cast this spell, the wizard must play a specific, complex melody (written as part of the spell) on a specially prepared flute carved from the thighbone of a being that was once under the effect of an *animate dead* spell. Furthermore, the caster must make a successful Musical Instrument (flute) proficiency check to cast the spell.

All undead in the area of effect must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or else be transfixed, unable to take any action other than to sway gently with the rhythm of the melody. Non-intelligent undead suffer a –3 penalty to the roll, while those with Low Intelligence suffer a –2 penalty.

The undead remain under the influence of the spell as long as the caster plays the flute and they are within the spell's range. However, if any of the undead under the influence of the spell are attacked, the effect on all of them is broken, and all Non- and Low Intelligence undead attack the caster. When thus enraged, the undead are turned as though they had 1 Hit Die more than their actual level, and they attack with a +2 bonus.

FOR THE DUNGEON MASTER

Players should stop reading now. The rest of this article deals with information for DMs only. It supplements the information provided on Vecna in official RAVENLOFT® campaign material presented in *Domains of Dread*, *Vecna Reborn*, and the new adventure, *Die, Vecna, Die!* by describing some of the magical treasures that the Chained God has hidden away in his palace.

Any item described here can easily be modified for a DM's own campaign, even if it does not include Vecna.

THE LIBRARIES OF VECNA

There are two libraries in Vecna's palace. One is for use by his minions in general, while the other is for his private use and that of a select few lieutenants.

The first library is a large series of chambers located on the second floor of the palace. Here, undead scribes record the thoughts of the Whispered One as they are transmitted directly to their otherwise empty minds. Vecna's independent servants, both living and undead, move quietly among the shelves and display cases, searching for tomes or magical items that might be of assistance in completing the tasks they have been given. There are thousands of tablets, collections of scrolls, and leather-bound books in this room, as well as hundreds of magical items of varying power. The lore collected here comes from countless worlds. Although much of it is of an evil and perverse nature, it is a place that wizards, alchemists, and sages dream about. Given time, some tidbit of information on just about anything can be found in this carefully organized library.

The second library is located in one of the palace's many high towers. Only Vecna himself frequents this cramped chamber, and even his most trusted lieutenants must seek his direct permission to enter. Within the heavily warded room are a few dozen powerful magical items and artifacts, and almost a hundred texts recorded in a wide variety of media. This chamber resembles a museum or trophy room more than a library, with the items and texts sorted by culture and world of origin rather than topic. When in a contemplative mood, Vecna can be found here.

The following selection is representative of what a party might find within this storehouse of forbidden lore, should they manage to infiltrate it. This should be an extremely difficult task, as Vecna is known as the Lord of Secrets and Hidden Things for a reason.

SELECTED TOMES OF THE FORBIDDEN LIBRARY

There are ninety-seven texts of varying shapes and sizes in this library, ranging from fragments of engraved stone tablets to tomes made from the skins of celestials and fiends and scribed with the blood of innocents. Some contain magical secrets of long-dead cultures; some contain fragments, or maybe even the entirety, of spells only imagined by most wizards; others might simply relate a myth that Vecna decided might someday lead an enemy to uncover secrets he wants to keep buried. Yet others are here simply because they amuse him, but he considers them too dangerous to leave in the main library.

The Book of Kings

This massive tome is 3 feet wide, 5 feet tall, and over 2 feet thick. Its covers are of gold-embossed leather, although the language in which the title is written has not been used for millennia. A *read magic* spell reveals the writing to mean *The Book of Kings*. The pages within, however, are always legible to any character who can read at least one language. The book radiates strong divination magic.

The book relates the complete history of whatever ruler a character turning its pages might think of. As soon as the would-be reader thinks of a ruler living or dead, the next page he or she turns to features a complete biography of that person, along with a portrait. The biography focuses particularly on dirty secrets or deeds the ruler wishes to keep hidden and weaknesses that those who would kill or pressure him might use, if any such exist. In game terms, the *Book of Kings* reveals to the reader all information that might be available on, for example, Vlad Drakov in the *Domains of Dread* sourcebook, along with whatever elaboration the DM cares to add.

If the reader thinks of someone who only appears to be a ruler but in truth is not (such as a puppet king who is in under the complete control of a ruling council), the book opens to a blank page. It functions only if the reader has a current, actual ruler in mind. Further, if the ruler in question is somehow protected from scrying, the pages likewise are blank.

"Ruler" applies to all-powerful leaders; the *Book of Kings* might, for example, reveal the head of a powerful thieves' guild, so long as that person does not answer to another power.

Using this book is dangerous. Whenever a character wishes to use it, she must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic or behave as if under the influence of a permanent *confusion* spell. A *remove curse* spell can lift the effect from the character.

Compendium Imortale Magica Malifica

The cover of this book features no writing or symbols. It is made of human skin stretched across a frame and spine of human bones. The pages within are vellum inscribed with human blood. It radiates faint magic, a preservative spell that protects it from the ravages of time. Further, the book carries a weak curse that causes any character of good alignment who touches it to suffer from bad luck for the next 7 days, suffering a –1 penalty to all saving throws. The dimensions of this gigantic book are 9 feet by 13 feet.

The book is written in the ancient language of the Suel and describes three different methods through which a spellcaster might transform into a lich—one path for wizards, one path for priests, and one path for bards. Each method requires the would-be lich to perform acts of horrendous evil in preparing a potion that aids the transformation, culminating in sacrifices that should turn the stomach of any sane character, good or evil.

In addition, the book contains *song of the dead*, a wizard spell once common among Suel spellcasters but which has long since passed into obscurity.

The Books of the Brethren

These twenty-one ancient tomes are covered by thin slate blocks with an unusual script upon them that no known magic (including the *comprehend language* spell) can interpret. Each is 18 inches wide and 42 inches tall. The title page of each volume is inscribed with a *sepia snake sigil* cast at 20th level. The pages of these tomes appear to be paper, but they are disconcertingly warm to the touch.

Between them, these volumes contain every spell presented in the *Wizard's Spell Compendium* and *Priest Spell Compendium* series, with the exception of spells unique to specific campaign settings or that are considered very rare, or spells granted only to specialty priests by a deity.

A reader must spend decades of intensive study before exhausting the secrets of these volumes. They are the perfect source of new spells that the DM might wish to introduce into a campaign, should a party manage to somehow carry them off. One of the unique wizard spells within the books is located on the last page of the seventeenth volume. It is *living pages*, and that spell is the source of the odd texture of the book's pages.

NEW SPELL

LIVING PAGES

(Alteration)
Level: 2
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 5 rounds
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: One book, scroll, or loose piece of paper
Saving Throw: None

This spell turns paper from a dead product of processed plants into a seemingly living, fleshy substance. The writing remains legible and the pages appear the same, but they feel warm when touched and, if a book so transformed is left open, the pages occasionally flutter and turn on their own.

The benefit of the spell is that paper affected by it makes saving throws as though it were leather, and the affected paper is not subject to the ravages of time or environment.

The magic is charged with the caster's own blood. When casting the spell, the wizard must read portions of the manuscript being enchanted while bleeding upon it for 5 points of damage. Upon completion of the spell, the blood is absorbed into the paper. The spell lasts for one decade per caster level, after which time it must be recharged with blood from any living spellcaster. One hit point worth of blood is required per item.

Selected Artifacts and Magical Items of the Forbidden Library

Vecna keeps eleven artifacts in this private chamber, including the genuine Sword of Kas, a powerful weapon once wielded by one of the Whispered One's most faithful lieutenants, who later became his most hated betrayer. Here are those artifacts that Vecna counts as part of his collection:

The Crown of Burgess

This simply adorned platinum crown is 1½ inches wide, except for a 2-inch wide section set with a blue sapphire. It does

DECANTER OF SPIRITS

not radiate magic—in fact, it cannot be detected by any magical means, nor can its wearer. The crown was made to fit the head of a human male and is small enough to be hidden under a large hood, such as that on a monk's robe.

The Crown of Burgess was the headdress of an ancient ruler, the only man in his time with the courage to stand against the unholy legions of Vecna. The monarch was executed in the courtyard of his own castle after his kingdom fell to Vecna's minions, as had all the surrounding domains before it. To mock the final king of Burgess, Vecna had the crown placed on the man's head before it was removed by the headsman's axe. As the axe fell, Burgess swore his crown would come back to haunt Vecna and that a person wearing it would play a role in the Whispered One's doom.

As the king died, his crown took on magical properties. Whether a god heard the king's oath, or whether it was the spiritual energies released by the death of such a powerful man, the crown was imbued with a mysterious aura that has only grown stronger as the centuries have worn on. It is now an artifact, one of the few counter measures to the Eye and Hand of Vecna and one of the few objects that can shield a mortal from Vecna's all-knowing sight.

Powers

Constant: The wearer of the Crown of Burgess is completely immune to all scrying, Divination spells, spells, spell-like powers, innate abilities, and magical items that are used to locate an individual. Similarly, all items and equipment carried by the wearer are also protected from all of the above effects. Nothing less than a Greater Power can locate the character.

Further, if the Crown is worn by a character who grafts the Eye or the Hand onto his body, the character must make a daily saving throw vs. death magic to resist falling under the influence of the artifacts. Each passing day imposes a cumulative –1 penalty to the saving throw, and once it has been failed, the character suffers the full effect of the curses upon the Eye and the Hand.

Invoked: The wearer gains 50% magic resistance against all damaging spells. If the resistance fails, the character receives a saving throw if normally allowed.

Curse: Each time the invoked power is activated, there is a cumulative 2% chance the wearer becomes permanently ethereal, as if affected by the 3rd-level wizard spell *wraithform*. The Crown does not become ethereal with the wearer.

In addition, for each day the Crown is worn, the wearer receives a saving throw vs. death magic. If the saving throw fails, the wearer's alignment instantly shifts to chaotic neutral, and the victim becomes obsessed with finding and destroying Vecna. Further, if the character's Intelligence is 10 or less, he becomes convinced that his body is now a vessel for the spirit of the last king of Burgess, Welnarek IV. If the character's Intelligence is 11 or higher, he merely believes that the king's spirit is urging him on.

Neither effect can be reversed with anything less than a *wish*.

Suggested Means of Destruction

- The Crown must be shattered with a hammer held in the Hand of Vecna.
- The Crown must be placed on the skull of King Welnarek IV.
- The Crown must be worn for a thousand and one days by a monarch who died but came back to life.

Decanter of Spirits

The Decanter of Spirits is a crystal bottle with a square bottom that becomes rounded toward the top and narrows to a long, delicate neck that is closed with a diamond-shaped stopper. It appears to be half filled with a blush wine when discovered. The fluid is not wine but a deadly poison (Type F) that instantly kills any being who consumes it.

The Decanter of Spirits was created when a young Borcan noble woman poisoned her entire household so as to speed up her inheritance. Unfortunately for her, one of the victims was a Vistani woman who cursed her with her dying breath. Although the woman received her inheritance, the next time she unstoppered the Decanter, the angry souls of her victims streaked out and dragged her soul into the Decanter.

Constant: The Decanter gives its owner resistance to level draining from undead attacks. Whenever an undead creature strikes the owner, the character can make a successful saving throw vs. death magic to avoid the level drain, but

other damage is applied normally. A saving throw must be made for each potential level loss. A hit by a spectre, for example, requires two separate saving throws.

Invoked: By withdrawing the stopper when within 30 feet of noncorporeal undead, the wielder can cause the creatures to be sucked into the bottle if they fail a saving throw vs. spell.

Once drawn into the Decanter, an undead creature can be commanded to come forth and attack a target of the character's choosing. The undead creature loses 1 Hit Die each time it is summoned, and the creature is irrevocably destroyed when it is reduced to 0 Hit Dice or when destroyed in combat. Up to twelve undead creatures can be trapped within the Decanter. The more undead creatures within it, the darker the liquid becomes. The undead never leave the bottle unless commanded. If the user knows what undead are trapped within the artifact, she can command specific spirits to come forth. Only one spirit can be released at a time, and if it survives combat, it returns to the Decanter.

Curse: Whenever the Decanter's ability to trap undead activates, the person carrying the artifact must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic. If the saving throw fails, the possessor is instantly turned into a wraith. The character retains the alignment and mind she had in life, and she is not rendered powerless by sunlight. Otherwise, she is subject all the other weaknesses and benefits of standard wraiths. However, when transformed characters kill through level draining, their victims do not rise as wraiths. Instead, their spirits are trapped within the Decanter of Spirits. Those so slain and trapped cannot be restored to life through any measure short of a *wish*. The Decanter of Spirits contains six spirits when first found.

Suggested Means of Destruction

- The artifact must be gifted to an ageless woman who poisoned her mother.
- The artifact must be shattered by a banshee's wail.
- The revenant of a murderer must throw the artifact against the wall of a righteous man's tomb.

Peace's Pin

This dark treasure appears like a tarnished silver hatpin with a mother-of-pearl head. Peace's Pin radiates magic of the Enchantment/Charm school.

A Barovian enchantress named Peace, who specialized in lending her talents to creating love potions and charms, created the pin centuries ago. She gradually became afraid that someone would turn her art against her and force her to be someone's lover through magical means. She spent months in the workshop to devise magical protection for herself.

Shortly after ensuring her own safety from magically induced passion, Peace fell in love with a handsome woodsman. However, she grew disturbed by the attention the woodsman paid to her apprentice and gradually came to believe the apprentice had used *charm* spells to steal her true love away. Peace eventually murdered them both in a jealous rage and was executed for the killings. Peace's fate has been mirrored by virtually everyone who has possessed the Pin since.

The Pin was believed to have been destroyed by the famous monster hunter Rudolph van Richten after he and a group of companions broke into the magical storehouse of King Azalin of Darkon and stole a number of magical items that were believed to be evil. In truth, the artifact was stolen by one of Van Richten's allies who gave it to his lover as a protective talisman. She eventually committed suicide after murdering him and her sister, and the Pin fell into the hands of the Order of the Guardians. Before they had a chance to hide it away, however, it passed into the possession of one of Vecna's servants who spirited it away to Cavitius.

Powers

When compared to most artifacts, the benefits from using the Pin are outweighed by the curse that follows. The only effects that are widely known are the protection from magical *charm* and the fact that the user eventually kills the object of his or her desire.

Constant: Makes the wearer immune to all Enchantment/Charm spells and spell-like effects, save for the natural charm abilities like those possessed by vampires, dryads, and others. (This flaw is not evident in the item until the situation arises.)

Invoked: The user can become *invisible*, as if under the effects of the spell cast by a 10th-level wizard. This power is activated when the user pricks himself or another person with the Pin and draws blood. In truth, the character is subtly manipulated by whatever force imbued the Pin with its dark powers.

Curse: For each week the user possesses the Pin, he must make a saving throw vs. spell. If the saving throw fails, the character gradually comes to believe any person he is romantically involved with is cheating on him. At this time, the user will discover the invoked power of the item, by seemingly accidentally pricking himself with the Pin.

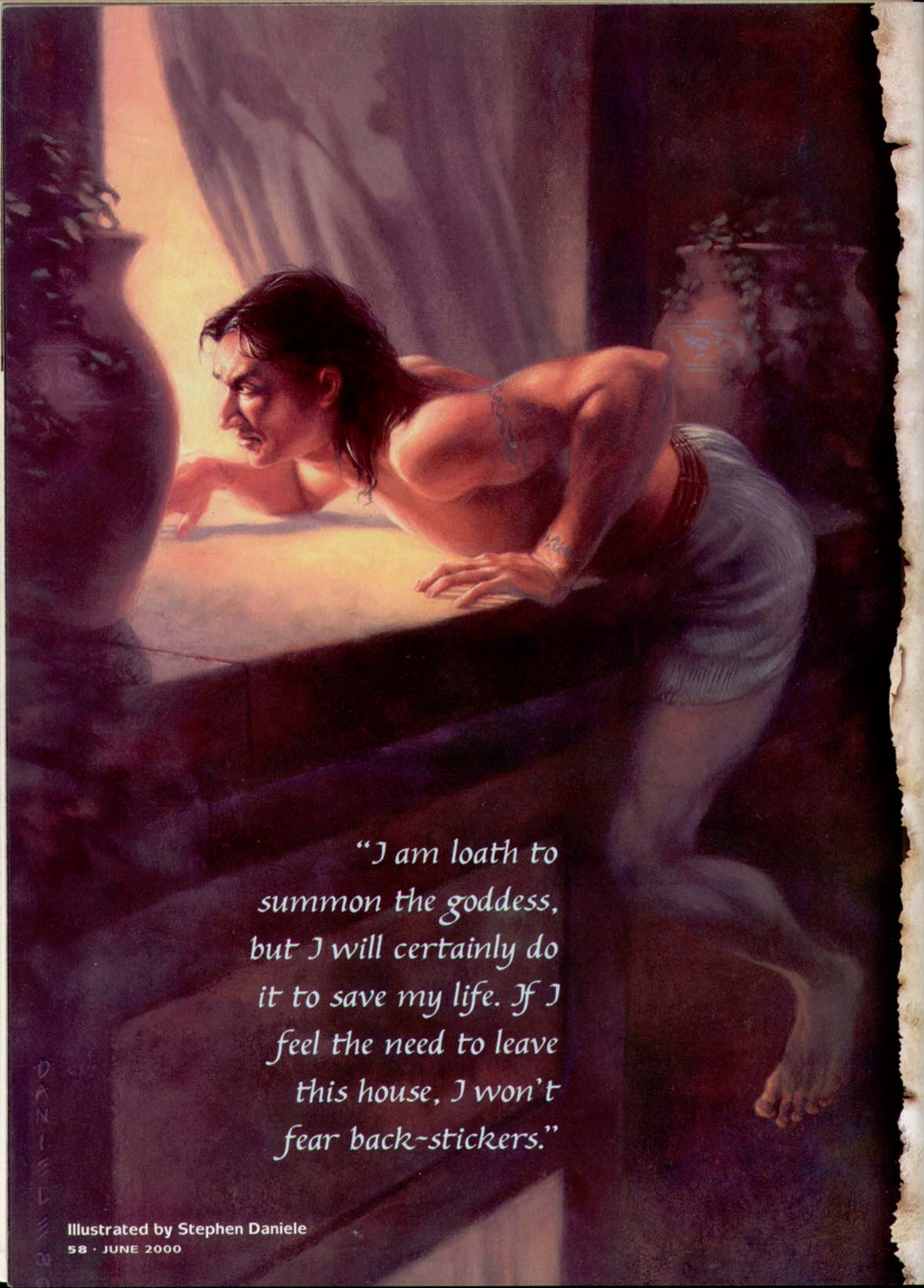
After three uses of the item's activated powers, the user gains the ability to assume *wraithform* twice per day, as though under the effect of the spell cast by a 20th-level wizard. This power replaces the ability to become *invisible*. The character must make a successful saving throw vs. spell after each use or fly into a homicidal rage, convinced that a person he loves or trusts is betraying him. The character then does his utmost to kill the perceived betrayer and his or her main ally. (These are always individuals the user either loves or is very close to.)

After nine uses, the user must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic or be instantly transformed into a spectre permanently. A saving throw must be made for each successive use, with the user instantly being transformed into a spectre when a roll is failed. The transformed character's first goal is to destroy the person he loves the most. A character so transformed cannot be restored to life by any means except through the intervention of a god.

Suggested Means of Destruction

- Must be kept under the pillow of a faithful spouse for three months.
- Must be kept in the pouch of a kender for a full year.
- Must be washed in the tears of a goddess of love.

Steve Miller is considered by many to be one of the grumpiest people writing roleplaying game material today. His most recent publication is the Die, Vecna, Die! *mega-adventure, co-authored with Bruce R. Cordell.*


"I am loath to summon the goddess, but I will certainly do it to save my life. If I feel the need to leave this house, I won't fear back-stickers."
DANIELE

Illustrated by Stephen Daniele

Anyway, I'm sure that taking the money—even just the first half—is what's important. What will get you killed.

"Maybe."

Probably.

He left the inn warily.

The Crab Woman was on the docks, and even in the afternoon, it was a busy place. It always had been. Nhol was situated on the lower courses of the waterway simply known as "The River." It was the hub of a trade network that ran thousands of leagues in every direction, from the corrupt and distant southern cities of Lhe and Rumq Qaj to the dark forests and plains of the savage north, where his own people, the horse-loving Mang, roamed.

Nhol had been through many changes in the past five years. From what he gathered, most of its nobility, never really sane, had abruptly crossed some threshold into total madness. The Emperor had ordered that the great temples dedicated to the all-powerful River god be ravaged and burnt to the ground. The priests had been stuffed into bags, beaten literally into pulp, and cast into the water. A number of monsters of uncertain but terrifying description had appeared in the river, slaying at will, and riots and fire had destroyed more than a fourth of the city.

Anyway, I'm sure that taking the money—even just the first half—is what's important.

Order of a sort had come two years ago, when Nhol was invaded by one of its own generals, *Suh*-something or other, backed by barbarian sellswords from the east. Soon afterward, the general apparently slipped on a marble floor and dashed his brains out. The present emperor was one of the barbarians, though he had taken the typically Nholish title of emperor, *Chakunge*.

But here at the docks, you would never know any of that had happened. Teak-brown rivermen in bright cotton kilts still swore, sang, sweated, and drank. Whores in flimsy yellow shifts still flirted from upper rooms. Crowds of boys too young to sail ran underfoot, pretending to be pirates, and the stained boardwalks still smelled of tar, fish guts, singed meat, vomit, boiled lemons, cinnamon, and piss.

Fool Wolf wondered whether he could steal a boat without being noticed. Probably.

But he had just arrived in Nhol, after months of wandering and privation in the wilderlands of the Giants and Stone Leggings. He wasn't ready to give up quite yet. Besides, he had someone to see and a problem to solve.

Where are we going? Chugaachik asked.

"To get rid of you," Fool Wolf answered.

The witch-woman picked at her dice with trembling hands. Her eyes were wild, and a thin drool of blood leaked from her left nostril.

"She is too powerful, this goddess inside of you," she rattled huskily. "Too wild. Even the sacred incense barely dulls her fury. Even knowing her name is of little help."

"You can do nothing?" Fool Wolf asked.

She laughed, bitterly. "When the River was still alive, he had many terrible children. Now wild things come into Nhol, spirits strange to me, and yet most of my knowledge is still useful when I deal with them. But this—thing—that inhabits you, this *Chugaachik*— she is like no spirit I have ever known."

"You must know someone who can help."

She took a shuddering breath and wiped the blood collecting at the tip of her chin. It smeared there, leaving a little red beard. "There might be one, an outlander like yourself. But he isn't easy to see. They call him Lepp Gaz."

Fool Wolf laughed.

"Why is that funny?"

"No reason," Fool Wolf said.

Lepp Gaz had eyes of such pale blue that they appeared white. Fool Wolf had seen such eyes before, rarely, but in those cases hair and skin were similarly pale. Lepp Gaz, however, had dark auburn hair. While his complexion was light compared to Fool Wolf's copper-brown, it still had a healthy color.

"You told my servants that you had news concerning my welfare," Gaz said, speaking the language of Nhol in an accented but perfectly comprehensible manner. "What is it?"

Fool Wolf smiled slightly. "I don't doubt your generosity. But I come here at some risk to myself."

Lepp Gaz diffidently stroked the air with his hand, indicating the courtyard around them. It was a sumptuous place, furnished with stools of burnished teak, a hundred flickering lavender-scented candles, flagstones covered with the pelts of the fabled opal lions of Oell.

"You were hired to kill me. Is that what you came here to say? You need not fear me on that account."

Fool Wolf tried not to show his surprise, but he failed.

"Come. How do you imagine the lady *She'de'ng* found you? You don't imagine she's actually acquainted with your sort of man, or knows the places you might haunt?" His lips curved in amusement. "Here is what happened. Her servant found you in the Crab Woman and arranged a meeting. You met her on one of her husband's barges, where you were moved by her beauty and pathos—or perhaps just her money. There you agreed to murder me. And now here you are! But what you don't know, I suppose, is that She'de'ng, poor dear, can have no secrets from me, and in fact, has accomplished my own purpose."

"That being?"

"Why, to bring you here, of your own free will, to my rooms."

"If you wanted me here, why didn't you just invite me?"

"Because if I had invited you, you would have been suspicious. You wouldn't have come. If I had tried to force the matter on the streets, you would have resisted. You might have

even summoned *her*, and that would have been—unfortunate. Here, however, my own power is very difficult to challenge."

Fool Wolf didn't care for the direction the conversation had taken. "I don't know what you're talking about," he lied.

"You are Fool Wolf, of the Mang, of the Broken Sky clan. You are a shaman, and your helping spirit is *Chugaachik*, a goddess of great power. She is a goddess I would very much like to have in my own possession."

"Ah, you are mad. Of course, I never intended to kill you. I came here because I heard you might be able to rid me of Chugaachik. If you want her, take her. If you can."

"I'm aware that you disdain her power, though why is beyond me. Still, this is a good thing. I desire her. You want to be rid of her. It's a perfect arrangement."

"She is too powerful, this goddess inside of you ..."

No, Chugaachik growled, *I don't like this man. He doesn't smell right. We should go.*

Fool Wolf hesitated for any eyeblink. Was the goddess afraid? She normally suggested evisceration, not flight.

Fool Wolf cleared his throat. "Again, why didn't you approach me with your proposition?" he asked Gaz.

"My reasons are as I stated them. Such is your nature that you would have feared a trick. I must also admit that it was a test—not of you, but of She'de'ng. I wondered just how badly she wants me dead. Now I know."

Fool Wolf remembered She'de'ng, the sorrow and hatred in her voice, the delicate, fine bones of her face. He was glad, in a way, that that part was real. He had never questioned her sincerity. He might have misjudged the situation, but he had not misjudged the woman.

"What happens now?" Fool Wolf asked.

"I want to study you, to divine the best way to extract her. Chugaachik is a dangerous goddess, and it will not be easy, even for me. I will require your presence in my sanctum for a short time each day. Otherwise, I think you will find my house—or, rather, the house of my archlord Kwer, whose favor I hold—very hospitable, and you may have your freedom in it."

"I can come and go?"

"It would be unwise for you to leave the house. It seems you've broken some rule or other of the local underworld and have a rather large price on your head. Within these walls I can protect you. Outside, I fear you might meet an untimely end."

"I wonder how they discovered I broke their law."

Lepp Gaz flashed a smile. "I think we understand each other, Fool Wolf, do we not?"

You don't understand him at all, Chugaachik whispered. *Make no bargain with him. We can defeat assassins.*

Fool Wolf shrugged. "I am loath to summon the goddess," he told Gaz, "but I will certainly do it to save my life. If I feel the need to leave this house, I won't fear back-stickers."

"You should. You were in Nhol before the changes? You remember the *Jik*?"

"The priest-assassins?"

"Exactly. At times they killed creatures who wielded truly godlike power, and they did so with great success. They had weapons more potent than steel, I assure you. What do you suppose happened to the *Jik* when the priesthood was destroyed and outlawed?"

"Ah," Fool Wolf said. No wonder things had become more 'organized.' "Perhaps I will accept your hospitality, then."

"And my offer?"

"If you can rid me of Chugaachik without harming me in the process, I am at your disposal."

"It can be done, I'm certain of it." He motioned. "My servant will show you to your quarters. Don't hesitate to complain if you find them inadequate. I hope—"

At that moment, a man came bustling into the room. He was a rather rotund fellow, with chestnut hair and light skin. Six tough-looking guards in blue kilts followed close on his heels.

"Gaz, Gaz! You must do something!" the man said, waggling his thick fingers in agitation.

"What is the matter, archlord Kwer?" Lepp Gaz asked.

"She'de'eng! She's had another—eh—accident. You must see to her!"

"Of course, Lord," Gaz replied, smiling. "I'm sure it's nothing serious."

"No, surely not," Kwer said, a little uncertainly.

"Well, let's have a look, yes." He nodded at Fool Wolf. "My servant Padwuru will see to your needs. I will see you at dinner."

"A banquet!" the fat lord Kwer said. "To celebrate the health of my princess! For I know you could never fail me, Gaz."

"Your confidence is moving, archlord. A banquet it shall be."

After a few hours alone in the sumptuous quarters provided for Fool Wolf, the elderly servant returned, bearing a silk robe embellished with crabs, eels, scorpion fish, and all other manner of river-creatures. After dressing in it, oiling his hair, and examining himself in the mirror, Fool Wolf allowed himself to be guided through corridors to a house adjoining Gaz's.

He was seated on a cushion at a long table furnished with a number of small dishes. Pickled catfish with strips of candied lime, salted almonds, turtle eggs stuffed with minced water scorpion, anise crayfish, black cheese fried with garlic, and twenty other things Fool Wolf couldn't begin to name.

Kwer sat at the head of the table, Gaz at the tail, and along its length some twenty men and women in rich clothing, most of the barbarian coloring.

Next to Kwer sat She'de'ng.

She was as beautiful as Fool Wolf remembered, clad in a loose robe of dark crimson swirling with black waves. That was open in front, and beneath she wore a gown of deep

umber that clung tightly to her contours. Her hair was held up in a complex knot by a simple gold pin.

She looked sad and pale, and, when her gaze met his, betrayed. But she didn't look injured. Fool Wolf wondered what exactly the nature of her "accident" had been.

"To our emperor, my fathers, and all the clans of the Wurut," their host said, raising a cup of something called 'pzel' that smelled like pine resin. It tasted better than it smelled.

"And you, guest," Kwer went on, poking a bejeweled finger at Fool Wolf. "From which of our territories do you hail?"

"Our friend Fool Wolf is Mang," Lepp Gaz said.

"Indeed?" Kwer said. "I thought they were never seen without their horses. Where are your horses, Mang?"

"I had some bad luck, not long ago," Fool Wolf replied.

"You must have! I've heard your horses are dearer to you than your wives. I've even heard that sometimes you take them as wives."

"Only when our choice of women is limited to Wurut captives," Fool Wolf replied.

Kwer reddened and his fingers gripped into fists, but then he relaxed and chuckled. "I suppose I can't protest, since as you can see my own wife is not of my people. But look at her! Who could resist such a jewel? Could you, Mang?"

"Only if she were the wife of my host," Fool Wolf replied, diplomatically.

"She was a princess, you know, the daughter of the old Nholish emperor. One of two, I'm told, but the other was killed years ago. So I have the only one, eh? The only real Nholish princess."

"Quite a find."

"A real Nholish princess and a Dzingar sorcerer! Perhaps I should add a Mang warrior to my collection, eh?"

Another course arrived: roasted pork with a sauce of mustard and black cherries, pigeons baked in paper, fried asps stuffed with black rice, heads still on, arranged on the plates as if preparing to strike.

"I love to listen to her talk," Kwer continued, stroking She'de'ng's silky hair. "The accent of the Waterborn is so charming. Say something, my jewel."

She'de'ng bent her head. "What should I say, archlord?" Her voice sounded husky.

"You see? You see?"

"Charming," Fool Wolf agreed.

"Sing something for us, nightingale."

"I can't, archlord."

"Of course you can. Sing for our guests."

She'de'ng blinked, then cleared her throat and began singing. Or trying to sing. Her voice rasped and cracked.

"What is this? Sing, I tell you!"

"My Lord . . ."

"If my archlord will remember," Lepp Gaz intervened, "the lady's accident?"

"What. Oh, yes. Quite right. Never mind, my dear, Please rest."

"Yes, archlord."

At that moment, a fellow in the blue batik kilt of one of Kwer's servants appeared.

"Archlord?" he bowed and knocked his head on the ground.

"What is it? We're eating."

"Someone has been captured in one of Lepp Gaz's traps."

Kwer clapped delightedly. "Just when I was in danger of growing bored! Bring him here."

"As you wish, archlord."

"And if he has any weapons, bring those, too."

"Oh, he has weapons, archlord."

The man was Nholish and dressed all in black, and he did indeed have weapons—a sword, an assortment of knives, a garrote, a small blowgun with a number of wicked little darts. His arms were chained behind his back and his feet were hobbled.

"Oh, my," Kwer said. "Some sort of thief."

"An assassin, I would say," Lepp Gaz remarked.

"An assassin? Sent to kill me? What nonsense! I'm immortal." He looked at Gaz. "I am, aren't I? Your sorcery—"

"You are beyond harm, archlord," Gaz said, a hint of irritation in his voice.

The captive's eyes had focused on Fool Wolf, who suddenly had no doubt who the killer had come for.

The chained man said nothing, however.

"Well, you will talk, eventually," Kwer opined. "Gaz, would you entertain us, please?"

"As the archlord wishes," Gaz replied, rising from his seat. "Let him be unbound."

A moment later, the captive stood free. Though his face remained impassive, his stance suggested puzzlement.

"Your weapons are there," Gaz said. "I'll allow you a moment with them."

The killer hesitated for less than a breath. Then he was a blur, sweeping up his sword and knife. The knife he flicked at Gaz, but his course took him toward the guard at the door.

The killer hesitated for less than a breath. Then he was a blur, sweeping up his sword and knife.

The knife missed Gaz by inches. He didn't flinch. Instead, he drew the slender sword at his side and pointed its tip at the assassin. He held it one-handed in a high guard.

The assassin's blade hummed a weird, shrill pitch and arced out, cutting the unfortunate door guard into two neat halves. The blade continued and struck through a foot of the stone wall with a sound like nails scratching slate.

He continued toward the door without pausing, but something unseen stopped him as abruptly as if he had run into a

wall. The goddess in Fool Wolf's chest sometimes gave him glimpses of the world-under-the-world, where the force of spirit dwelled, but all he could see at the door was a faint wavering.

The assassin understood quickly. He turned and hurled himself at Kwer, perhaps hoping for a hostage. Gaz moved like a panther to intercept him, the first look resembling concern Fool Wolf had yet seen tightening his face. Kwer's bodyguards clumped around him, a wall of flesh.

Gaz and the assassin came together and their blades met, met again, then belled in a flurry of blows so elegant that the two men looked like they were fighting on a stage, not too win, but to entertain.

Fool Wolf blinked, and suddenly the blade Lepp Gaz held didn't look like a blade at all—it looked like a long, slender sting from some sort of insect, and Gaz wasn't holding it, it was part of his arm. Fool Wolf felt as if spiders were walking across his eyes. Shivering, he closed them, and when he opened them again the assassin was leaping high above a slash to his knee, counterattacking to Gaz's head. The downward stroke cut Gaz from the crown of his skull almost to his crotch.

Without his robes, his body was hard and muscular, covered with tattoos of a singular blackness.

At the same time, surely in a dying reflex, Gaz's blade came back up, and the assassin took two steps back, lacking his sword arm. The severed arm continued to hold the sword, which still lodged in Gaz, about where his belly-button would be.

Gaz drew the Nholish blade from himself with his left hand. "Interesting weapon," he murmured. Fool Wolf could see no sign that the sorcerer had been split in half. The cut had entirely vanished.

Gaz walked over to the stunned assassin and thrust his sword into his heart. Again, Fool Wolf had the illusion that it was a sting, or the greedy mouth of a spider, poisoning and eating all at once.

Bile rose in his throat, and the vision faded as Gaz sheathed the weapon.

"Oh, well done, Gaz!" Kwer cheered. "Most entertaining. The look on his face! Why it's still there, isn't it?"

It was indeed. The assassin, whoever he had been, looked as if he had seen the most amazing thing in the world. Perhaps he had.

"Thank you, Lord," Gaz said. "But if I may beg your indulgence, that was somewhat wearying. I should like to retire for the evening."

"Well—" a petulant tone crept into Kwer's voice. "If you must. Indeed, perhaps we should all retire. Nothing better is likely to happen tonight." He nudged his wife and winked broadly. "Well—maybe something *almost* as good," he chortled.

She'de'ng's face didn't change.

Fool Wolf returned to his room as a very worried man, with several questions of a more than rhetorical sort.

The most important one was simple; could Gaz be trusted to remove Chugaachik from him without killing him?

Chugaachik answered that for him. *He will kill you if you let him.*

"Who is he? Why do you fear him?"

I don't fear him. But it would be prudent to leave.

"When have you ever been prudent, bitch-goddess?"

You should put aside your differences with me for the time being. We are in danger.

"Differences? You tortured my cousin to death!"

We did that together, sweet.

"No. Shut up." He pressed her down where she couldn't speak to him. He couldn't hold her there forever, but for the moment he didn't need the distraction.

He went out his window, dropping to the stone courtyard below, in search of answers he could trust.

Nholish palaces were inward looking, with myriad courts and no windows facing out. He padded silently from one enclosure to the next, remembering where Gaz's quarters were, hoping that there weren't any more assassins inside the walls. It wasn't long before he saw a lighted window on the second floor that seemed to be in the right place. He leapt and caught the broad casement and, with very little sound, pulled himself onto it. It was long and wide enough to lie flat on, and he did so to minimize the chances of being seen from below. Then he found a parting in the drapes and peered through.

He saw Lepp Gaz at once. The sorcerer was naked. Without his robes his body was hard and muscular, covered with tattoos of a singular blackness. He was holding his sword, standing as if meditating.

As Fool Wolf watched, Gaz placed the sword in his left hand and with a quick motion cut his right wrist. Blood drooled out, running black into a small cup. At first Fool Wolf thought the color a trick of the light, but after a few spurts it came out red. An instant after that, Gaz stopped bleeding. Then he signed to someone Fool Wolf couldn't see.

A man approached, a servant by the look of him. Gaz sat on a cushion in front of a low table. The man unrolled a bundle of thin needles set together in a round ivory base, so that they resembled a chisel. In the cloth was also a small hammer.

The man dipped the needles in the black blood, placed their clustered points against a tattoo-free section of Gaz's chest, and struck the base with the hammer.

Gaz howled, a strangling scream completely out of proportion to the amount of pain that should have been inflicted by a few small needles.

The tattooer moved the needles and struck again. Again Gaz gasped in pain, and his forehead was plastered in sweat, though the night was cool.

This went on for some time, until Gaz finally held up his hand to command a cessation. "Later," he gasped. "We'll finish this later. I want wine, now."

"Yes, lord Gaz," the servant said. He bowed and hurried off.

Fool Wolf watched for a few more moments, but Gaz just sat there. The half-finished tattoo was of a stick-figure man with a large, one-eyed head caught in the middle of a widening spiral. He had never seen the symbol before.

The tattooer moved the needles and struck again. Again Gaz gasped in pain, and his forehead was plastered in sweat, though the night was cool.

As quietly as a breeze across ice, Fool Wolf let himself back down into the courtyard. After reflecting for a moment, he found a quieter place and ascended to the roof.

From there, Nhol was a vast, dark maze. No forest, no mountain pass was as dark as a city at night. The wan quarter moon made ashy plateaus of the highest rooftops, but around them was pitch. Beyond and below, the great River flowed, a pale and distant twin to the thick band of stars overhead his people called the trail of ghosts.

Chugaachik was back in his ear. *Watch out*, she said.

Fool Wolf dropped flat, just as something hissed by him, struck sparks against the roofing tile and whined off into the darkness.

Cursing silently under his breath, Fool Wolf slipped back down into the palace. How many assassins were out there? Could they see in the dark? The stories he remembered about the priest-killers of old Nhol made them to be barely human. He was starting to believe it.

And Lepp Gaz had killed one as easily as blowing his nose.

Fool Wolf returned to his room.

He wasn't alone, he knew that almost instantly.

"Come out," he said.

She'de'ng stepped from the anteroom. She had changed into a sleeping gown of green silk, with a very high collar. She was very beautiful, and he felt the same stirring interest he had the first time he saw her.

"Ah," Fool Wolf said. "It's you."

"You lied to me," she accused.

"Yes," Fool Wolf replied. "But you didn't tell me everything, either. You still haven't. That Lepp Gaz is a sorcerer, for instance, or why exactly you want him dead. That fellow tonight, at banquet. That could have been me, princess." He cocked his head. "Why did you want me to kill Lepp Gaz?"

She stared at him a minute, her eyes sparking briefly with some unknown passion, then going dull again.

"We ruled this city, once," she said, absently trailing her hand along the bas-relief of a mudfish. "My family. The Waterborn. We were the children of the River, and none could stand against us. Power was our birthright. *His* waters flowed in our veins." She looked away. "Some were born with too much of *Him* and became monsters. My sister, Hezhi, was filled with such wild puissance she had to be executed. But those of us who didn't change, or go mad—we were destined to rule. I inherited very little real power. I did not care. I went to parties, I drank, I stupefied myself with *n'deng* dust. I was happy.

"Then it all blew away. They say the River left us, or perhaps even died. My father and most of my relatives went mad, and then the barbarians came and killed them. I wish they had killed me. I wish I had been ugly. They kept my mother, too, for awhile, until they didn't like the looks of her. But that was before Lepp Gaz."

"Others have suffered more than you, princess. You could have done worse. Archlord Kwer seems to dote on you."

"Indeed," she said, very softly. "Do you think so?"

She unfastened her robe and let it fall, stood naked, chin held up proudly.

He saw now why she'd had difficulty singing. A crude series of sutures ran completely around her throat, looking very much as if her head had been cut off and then sewn back on. An ugly ridged scar circumscribed her arm just above the elbow. The rest of her body was pocked with scars from knife and sword wounds, burns, and abrasions.

"Lord Kwer loses his temper, at times," She'de'ng said. "Sometimes he does it for fun."

"*Horse Mother*," Fool Wolf swore.

"When he actually kills me, he calls for Lepp Gaz. Lepp Gaz repairs me so I can be broken again. And again. That is why I want Lepp Gaz dead."

Fool Wolf looked at her and realized his fingers were trembling, which struck him as odd. He had seen worse than this. He had done worse than this, when the goddess walked with his legs.

"I have a question, princess. Did Lepp Gaz ever stab you with his sword? The one he used tonight?"

"Yes. The first time my husband wounded me to death. I thought he was finishing me off. He stabbed me, and there was nothing. The next day I was awake, and alive."

"Put your robe back on," Fool Wolf said. "Put it back on and leave me."

"I want to die," she said. "I want to join my father."

"Leave."

She did, and Fool Wolf sat on the bed.

He looked back at the window. If he was fast enough, if he chose the right direction, he might get by the killers waiting outside. The odds were with him, really.

Call on me, the goddess suggested. *I will get you out easily.*

"No," he murmured. "I know what you would do."

And why shouldn't we? At this moment Gaz is weak. Kill him and take his sword. With that, we could do anything.

Fool Wolf coughed up a sick laugh. "Yes. How you would enjoy that. A harem of playthings you could torture to death and then return to life. No, I think I'll take my chances outside."

The goddess changed tactics. *Gaz will know you spoke to her. He has her soul. He can see through her eyes.*

"I managed that on my own, thank you," Fool Wolf grunted. "It doesn't matter. I can still beat him."

Don't be stupid. You have no idea who you are dealing with.

"Do you? Tell me then."

But the goddess fell silent.

Gaz's regard felt like a flaying knife stripping off his skin. Fool Wolf bore it, trying not to flinch.

"She's beautiful, your goddess," the sorcerer said. He lifted a small cask and flipped it open. Inside was a vial of dark fluid. Gaz regarded it speculatively, then set the cask down, closing it.

"You can see her?" Fool Wolf asked.

"Yes. I have familiar spirits that allow me to see beneath the top of the world." He shook his head in genuine wonder. "Beautiful. She must be mine." He picked up a hollow bone incised with fluid characters and peered through it at Fool Wolf. "Yes," he murmured.

"I don't like sorcery, no matter how painless," Fool Wolf admitted.

Kill him, now, Chugaachik hummed in his bones. Fool Wolf had a brief, violent image of sinking his teeth into Gaz's throat and tearing, of feeling blood tickle down his chin and chest. He shook it off.

"What will you do with her?"

"I've developed a new sort of sorcery," Gaz said. "A new way of collecting gods and using their powers. It really needn't concern you."

"How will you draw her forth?"

"I really haven't decided the best method yet. The trick is to keep her from manifesting in you during the process."

"That shouldn't be a problem. It's the one and only thing I control about her. If I will her to remain in my mansion of bone, she will."

The sorcerer smiled briefly. "Mansion of bone," he repeated. "Very poetic, you Mang." He rubbed his chin. "No, certain processes might allow her to free herself, whether you will it or not."

Fool Wolf nodded sagely, as if he understood. In a way he did. Gaz figured that if Fool Wolf believed he was about to lose his life, he would release her. Because he was pretty certain how the sorcerer intended to extract the goddess from his skin—with that sword of his. Lepp Gaz wasn't going to bother separating Fool Wolf's soul from Chugaachik's—he would simply take both.

Fool Wolf grinned. "I'll be glad to get rid of her. When do we start?"

"Tonight, I think. I need to review a book in the library at the palace, a treatise on related matters. Until tonight?"

"Of course."

Fool Wolf left the magician. As he was passing though the outer chambers, however, he heard a peculiar chanting from behind a heavy door. The language sounded like Nholish, but it resembled Mang, too. It might have been an invocation, or a curse.

He walked past as if he hadn't heard it.

He pretended to lounge about the palace, eating, joking, drinking, flirting with the women. But when he was certain Gaz had gone off to the Royal Palace, he excused himself to go to his room.

But he went, instead, to Lepp Gaz's suites. The outer door was locked, but he had spent some time learning the secrets of such civilized devices, and that youthful study paid off now, as it had in the past.

The second door was locked too, and it took him a bit longer to pick that, but it finally creaked open too, revealing a third door made of iron bars. Beyond, in a small cell, was the assassin that Gaz had bested the night before.

Alive. He glared at Fool Wolf through the bars.

"How are you feeling?" asked Fool Wolf. "The last I saw of you, you didn't look so well."

"You are a dead man, Mang."

"*You* are a dead man. I saw you die. I saw that arm come off. Yet here you are, and with both arms."

"You will never leave Nhol alive."

"Well, that may be. Right now I'm mostly concerned with leaving this palace alive, and not in the state you are in. We can help each other. Surely your grudge against Lepp Gaz is greater than your grudge against me. Especially when one considers that I did not actually violate your law. I have not, in fact, attempted to kill Lepp Gaz."

The man cocked his head. "You have a point, though the order for your death has been given and cannot be rescinded. Still, I might be convinced to help you. My brothers need never know. What do you have in mind?"

"Why are you still alive?"

The assassin considered that for a moment. "My life is not in my body. It has been stolen but survives elsewhere. Thus my body can be brought to a seeming of life."

"Correct. Lepp Gaz drew it from you with that sword of his, then had it tattooed onto himself."

"My soul is a tattoo?"

"So it would seem."

The killer ground his teeth silently for a moment, but then he took a long, slow breath. "A new kind of blood magic," he

finally said. "Interesting." His eyes widened. "I struck Gaz, and he didn't die either. That means his soul is elsewhere, too."

"You cut him nearly in half. That means his soul probably isn't tattooed on his own body—he wasn't worried that you would hit it by chance. He let you cut him."

"Then where is his soul?"

Fool Wolf smiled. "There is a cask in his sanctum. In it is a crystal vial full of the same black fluid he extracts for his tattoos. That is where his soul is, I think."

"How do we get it?"

"Tonight, he is supposed to remove a certain goddess from my body. Never mind the details. I'll free you beforehand, and you will hide behind the curtains in his sanctum. When he begins, you attack him, and during the distraction I will open the box. I will signal you—the signal will be when I shout 'So!'"

"Why not the other way around? Why don't you distract him while I open the box?"

"Because I know where he keeps the key that opens the box, and will have it on my person."

The assassin glared, then nodded curtly.

Humming, Fool Wolf returned to his rooms. On his way there, he took a servant aside and sent a message to Lord Kwer. Then he took a nap, a grin stretching across his face as he fell asleep.

"...His soul probably isn't tattooed on his own body—he wasn't worried that you would hit it by chance."

Fool Wolf watched silently as Lepp Gaz took off his sword and outer robe and lay them on a table beside him. The sorcerer then lit several braziers and sprinkled various powders into them. Smoke puffed up, aromatic and spicy. She'de'ng, who sat behind the table, coughed and looked more puzzled than usual.

"You seem nervous," Lepp Gaz said to Fool Wolf, as he fussed around with his equipment. "I assure you, this will be both painless and harmless."

"I don't like sorcery, no matter how painless," Fool Wolf admitted.

"Understandable. Do you think you will miss her?"

"Would you miss boils on your genitals?"

"Her curse makes you very powerful."

"It also makes me very unpopular. You aren't trying to talk me out of this, are you?"

"Not at all."

"Why is the princess here?"

Gaz smiled at him. Then he walked, very near, so near his lips were nearly touching Fool Wolf's ear. "My darling Chugaachik will need a body. She'de'ng is both durable and attractive."

Fool Wolf felt an odd tingle on his scalp.

"What?" He managed.

"She will be my mate, your goddess. I have sought her for a long time."

Kill him. Kill him now, Chugaachik said.

You know him?

He isn't Human. Kill him. I promise you, once he is dead, I return your body. I swear it.

"She's talking to you, isn't she?" Gaz said. He kissed Fool Wolf on the side of the head. "Don't worry, my sweet. We will be together again, as once we were. As once we were." He straightened. "Now—" the door suddenly swung open, and Kwer stood there.

"Hah! Hello, Gaz," the archlord said. "Caught you!"

"Archlord?"

"She'de'ng. I know you've been seeing her. I—"

Everyone Fool Wolf wanted in the room was now here. "So!" he shouted, and leapt into motion.

Except that his legs failed him. They felt like dead snakes. *The smoke,* he realized suddenly.

Meanwhile, the assassin bounded from behind the curtains, leaping straight for the little cask on the table rather than toward Gaz, as they had agreed. Lepp Gaz merely watched him, a sneer on his face.

When the man touched the box, the air barked and a purplish flash enveloped the assassin. He fell to the floor twitching. Gaz regarded him for a moment, then turned his gaze back to Fool Wolf, who was still struggling toward Kwer, now on hands and knees.

"Oh, very good, Wolf," the sorcerer said. "You never intended to go after the cask. You never thought my soul was there at all. You lied to our assassin friend, here."

"*What* is going on?" Kwer demanded.

"Our Mang friend has discovered a certain secret," Lepp Gaz said.

"He knows about you and She'de'ng, too?"

Lepp Gaz blinked and sighed. "No, you imbecile."

"Then why is she right—" the archlord goggled. "*What* did you call me? She'de'ng, come here!"

She'de'ng moved toward her husband, her head down, arms straight at her sides. There was something odd about the right side of her dress, as if she had something hidden under it.

Gaz turned back to Fool Wolf. "How did you guess?"

"That your soul is tattooed on Kwer? Why else would you tolerate the fat fool, when you could so easily be his master? And he is an archlord, well fed, well protected. A safer place for a soul than in an egg on a far mountain guarded by lions, if the old stories are to be trusted."

"My tattoo?" Kwer said. "It makes me immortal. Gaz, doesn't it make me immortal?"

Gaz ignored Kwer. "You lied to the assassin because you know I can see through his eyes," Gaz said, nodding approval.

"Of course. As you can see through She'de'ng's—that's what you meant when you said she couldn't have secrets from you."

"But I *can*," She'de'ng said. Everyone turned to her in surprise. "Lepp Gaz can see what I see, but he can't know what I think, feel what I feel—or see what I choose not to look at." She lifted her robe, and Kwer turned away from her, back toward Gaz and Fool Wolf, an expression of complete bafflement on his face.

"No!" Lepp Gaz suddenly snapped his wrist up in a series of complex signs, muttering an invocation. Then he made a peculiar sound, half gasp and half suck.

Kwer made an altogether different peculiar sound, something like the high pitched, surprised shriek of a baby. He had cause, at least. The point of Lepp Gaz's peculiar sword was sticking out of his stomach, a handspan beneath where his belly button ought to be. The red blade waggled obscenely, then withdrew like a worm back into its hole. Kwer, looking frightened and offended, toppled forward.

"The moment is yours. You will regret this one day—very bitterly, I'm afraid..."

She'de'ng withdrew the sword and held its bloody length before her.

"Give me that," Lepp Gaz demanded.

"Not yet," She'de'ng replied. "I wish to speak first. As you must know, I passed your sword not only through Kwer's fat belly, but through the odd tattoo on his lower back. Your soul is now in my blood, so I suggest you listen to me."

Gaz was looking very pale. "The sword won't work for you," he growled.

"I felt it work," She'de'ng replied, haughtiness creeping into her voice. "I am not ignorant to the ways of power, as you must know from having stolen mine. I am *Waterborn*."

Fool Wolf had managed to get dizzily to his feet. He leaned against the wall. "You planned all of this," he accused. "Me, the assassin—all distractions to give you just two breaths to pick up that sword and kill your husband."

She smiled. "Yes. It had to be this sword, and no other. Because now I have something Lepp Gaz desires, whereas with any other weapon I would only have a dead husband, one easily raised back to life."

"And what do you want now?" Gaz grunted.

"I want *your* soul on *my* skin," she told the sorcerer. "Then I know you will treat me well—that I will be safe." She kicked Kwer's unmoving corpse. "I want *his* soul, too, and him alive again, as many times as I want him to be. Give me those things, and you can have your sword back, and I will be your friend and ally."

Gaz seemed to consider that. "I've underestimated you," he said, finally. "And I'm impressed. I agree. My life will be safer with you than with that fool, anyway. What of the Mang?"

"I couldn't care less," She'de'ng replied, dismissively.

"The Mang is leaving," Fool Wolf grunted. "Gaz, you haven't lifted a finger to take control of this situation. Because you *can't*. As long as your soul is locked up in her blood, you have no power."

"Oh, I have power."

"Not much, I think. If you try to stop me, I release Chugaachik. That you will not like at all. Princess, you will like it even less."

Do it! Chugaachik all but shrieked in his head. he had never heard her sound so—almost panicked. *This may be our last chance!*

"You're bluffing," Gaz said.

"No," Fool Wolf lied, "I'm not. You claim to know Chugaachik? Imagine her with that sword." He let that sink in, then repeated, "I'm leaving."

Gaz spoke almost gently. "I *will* find you," he said. "I have searched for Chugaachik for a thousand years. I will have her. I can wait a bit longer, but I will have her. Do you understand?"

Fool Wolf grinned tightly. "If the assassins outside kill me, you will have neither of us."

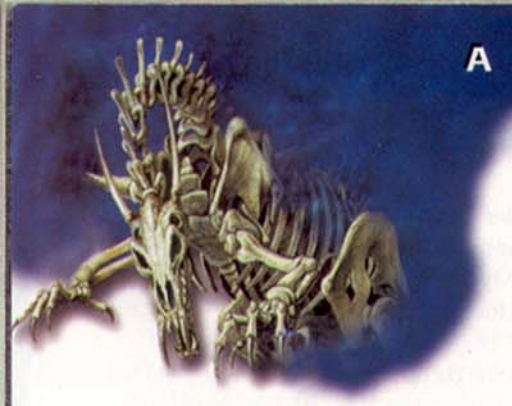
Gaz's face pinched, then relaxed into a smile. "Well done," he said, finally. "The moment is yours. You will regret this one day—very bitterly, I'm afraid—but I can see you're in no mood for that singular and important truth." He sighed. "There is an underground passage that will take you out. The brotherhood doesn't know of it. I'll have a servant show you where it is."

"Tell *me* where it is."

Gaz told him, and Fool Wolf left them there to consummate their new relationship. He took the assassin's sword and a knife, and with it persuaded four of Kwer's servants to proceed him in the tunnel, which was just where Gaz said it was. The first three succumbed to sorcerous traps Gaz must have placed in the tunnel at some time in the past; the fourth walked with Fool Wolf into the night air of the desert outside of Nhol.

Fool Wolf stole a boat and turned it south. Chugaachik, oddly silent, did not trouble him, and by sunrise, he was in the Swamp Kingdoms, and ancient, corrupt Nhol a memory.

Greg Keyes recently cut his hair, grew a beard, and moved from Seattle to Savannah, Georgia. He insists there is nothing suspicious about this.



Dragon Dweomers IV

As if dragons weren't deadly enough, here are even more spells with which they can crush those meddling heroes.

by Robert S. Mullin

illustrated by John Matson

THE *DRACONOMICON* ACCESSORY FIRST CODIFIED THE notion of dragon magic—a magical discipline that, while technically identical to standard magic use, is available only to dragons. According to the *Draconomicon*, dragon magic's exclusivity to dragonkind is born from the unique mental architecture of the draconic mind; thus, only dragons are fully qualified to use it properly, while other races who attempt to employ it usually suffer disastrous results.

A second property inherent to dragon magic is a given spell's power when compared to its attributed level. The *Draconomicon* explains that dragon magic spells are routinely more powerful than standard spells of the same level, while nondragon equivalents tend to be of a higher level.

"Dragon Dweomers IV" introduces several new dragon spells to the existing body of dragon magic as presented in the *Draconomicon*, the previous "Dragon Dweomers" articles (*DRAGON® Magazine* #218, #230, and #248), Ed Greenwood's "Wyrms of the North" series (from issues #230–#259), and the *Cult of the Dragon* accessory.

Breath Control

(Alteration)
Level: 1
Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

When cast, *breath control* enables the dragon to exercise a measure of control over a variable number of breath weapons it releases after the spell's casting. Essentially, the spell enables the dragon to improve a breath attack's low-end efficiency by decreasing its high-end capacity—an exchange that ensures more uniform and reliable breath weapon damage potential.

For example, a blue dragon's breath weapon uses a d8 base for damage purposes. When the affected breath weapon is issued, damage dice rolls of 1 are counted as 2, while rolls of 8 are counted as 7. All other dice results, ranging from 2–7, remain unchanged. This model is equally applicable to a higher or lower damage dice base, as per the dragon type in question. A *controlled* breath weapon still permits the usual saving throw to reduce the damage by half, of course.

The dragon can affect a number of breath weapon attacks equal to its age category; thus, *breath control* affects five breath attacks when cast by a Young Adult dragon, six breath attacks when

cast by an Adult dragon, seven for Mature Adult, and so forth, up to twelve *controlled* breath attacks for Great Wyrms. In all cases, however, the spell affects breath weapons in consecutive order—its effects will not skip over one breath attack to influence a subsequent breath attack.

Only damage-inflicting breath weapons can be combined with this spell. Non-damaging breath weapons (such as paralyzation, sleep gas, and so forth) count against the number of affected breath weapons the spell allows but are not altered by the spell.

Breath control spells cannot be stacked; a subsequent casting merely negates and replaces a previous casting.

Breath control can be negated by a successful *dispel magic* or similar power; otherwise, it remains active until the dragon releases the appropriate number of breath attacks.

This spell is useless to casters without a natural breath attack or those whose breath weapons inflict a set amount of damage. (Temporary breath weapons acquired via spells, magical items, or the like are not considered "natural" for this spell's purposes.) Nondragon casters who possess a breath weapon that is both natural and has variable damage dice find that *breath control* reduces the breath weapon's damage to its minimum—that is, each base damage die result is treated as a 1. It might be possible for such casters to develop a nondraconic *breath control* variant, however, if the DM allows.

Claw Aura

(Evocation)
Level: 2
Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Special

When this spell is cast, the dragon's front claws are enveloped by a visible *aura* that reflects the dragon's breath weapon. Thus, a fiery *aura* shrouds a red dragon's claws, an electrical *aura* for blue dragons, acidic for black dragons, and so forth. If the dragon has multiple breath-weapon types, the dragon chooses which breath weapon the *aura* mimics. Once selected, however, the *aura* cannot be changed.

While the spell lasts, the *claw aura* has two possible effects on the dragon's claw attacks, depending on the particular breath weapon mimicked.

CLAW AURA

In the case of breath weapons that inflict damage (such as fire, acid, chlorine gas, and so on), the *claw aura* effectively doubles the dragon's claw damage dice. Thus, a claw attack that normally inflicts 1d8 damage inflicts 2d8 damage instead. With each successful hit, the victim receives a saving throw vs. breath weapon to reduce the strike's damage by half, but these saving throws apply only to the extra damage dice provided by the *claw aura*, not the damage inflicted by the actual claw strike itself.

In the event that the *claw aura* duplicates a non-damaging breath weapon (such as a silver dragon's paralysis weapon or a brass dragon's sleep gas), there is no damage increase. Instead, the *claw aura* afflicts targets with the effect in question, though saving throws against the breath effect still apply if appropriate. Regardless of the saving throw's outcome, the claw damage itself is delivered as usual.

Objects struck by a *claw aura* are subject to the effects normally associated with the breath weapon in question. Therefore, such objects must make saving throws accordingly.

Claw aura can be negated early by the dragon's silent command, or if it is subjected to a successful *dispel magic*.

This spell has almost no value to non-dragons, as the caster must be equipped with a natural breath weapon that the spell can mimic. (Temporary breath weapons acquired via spells, magical items, or the like are not considered "natural" for this spell's purposes.) Non-dragon casters who possess a natural breath weapon, however, might be able to modify the spell for their own use, at the DM's discretion.

Magnify Breath Weapon

(Alteration, Evocation)
Level: 2
Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

Magnify breath weapon provides a temporary boost to a dragon's breath attacks. In game terms, the breath weapon's base damage dice is bumped up one damage dice category. Thus, for the spell's duration, breath weapons with a d4 base operate with a d6 base, those with a d6 base operate with a d8 base, and so forth. Victims still receive a saving throw vs. breath weapon to reduce the damage by half.

Like *breath control*, this spell has no effect on nondamaging breath weapons, though such breath weapons do not negate the spell. *Magnify breath weapon* can be negated early if subjected to a successful *dispel magic* or similar effect. Otherwise, the spell lasts for the full duration, regardless of the dragon's wishes.

Magnify breath weapon cannot be combined with a *breath control* spell; instead, whichever of the two spells is cast second replaces and negates the other. Similarly, this spell cannot be stacked with itself to boost the breath weapon further. Subsequent castings simply extend a previous casting's duration accordingly.

Magnify breath weapon is of no value to casters without a natural breath weapon or a breath weapon with a set damage die. (Temporary breath weapons acquired via spells, magical items, or the like are not considered "natural" for this spell's purposes.) Nondragon casters who possess a breath weapon that is both natural and has variable damage dice would be wise to develop a nondraconic variation, as the draconic version can be deadly if used by nondragons. In particular, each time the nondragon caster attempts to release a breath weapon while the spell is in effect, there is a 50% chance that the attack is not expelled; instead, the breath weapon's damage applies to the caster as it consumes him or her from within.

Hoard Cache

(Alteration)
Level: 3
Range: Touch
Components: V
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: One container
Saving Throw: None

Hoard cache provides the casting dragon with a quick and easy means to transport its hoard when circumstances demand relocating to a new lair. The spell enables the dragon to temporarily transform an ordinary box, chest, barrel, or similar enclosed container into an extra-dimensional receptacle akin to a *portable hole* or *bag of holding*, though one with near infinite storage capacity. The dragon must touch the container during the spell's casting or else the spell fails and is wasted.

Once the transformation is complete, the dimensional space remains active indefinitely, provided the dragon maintains physical contact with the container. If the wyrm breaks contact with the container, it remains stable for 1 hour. The dragon can break and reestablish contact repeatedly, but the 1 hour time limit is not renewed with each contact. If the spell expires due to noncontact, the container's contents are lost forever. Thus, a wise dragon maintains contact as long and often as possible until the hoard is removed from the *hoard cache*.

As noted, the *hoard cache* has near infinite storage capacity, enabling it to hold the dragon's entire trove. The dimensional space is precise in accordance to its cargo, expanding and contracting as treasure is added or removed, but weight never exceeds that of the container itself. It cannot store items that are normally too large to fit through the container's opening, so larger containers are generally preferable to smaller ones.

A *hoard cache* container is not affected by *dispel magic* and similar powers, but as a dimensional space, it is subject to the same dangers associated with *portable holes, bags of holding*, and similar dimensional receptacles. In this instance, a *hoard cache* is treated as a *portable hole* for the purpose of determining the results if it comes in contact with another dimensional container or in case the *hoard cache* container itself is damaged or destroyed. In the event that the container is brought within an *anti-magic shell*, dead magic zone, or similar magic-dampening condition, the *hoard cache* is not negated or destroyed, but cargo cannot be removed or added while it remains in such an area. Noncontact time still counts against the spell if the container is left unattended within such an area.

Hoard cache cannot be made permanent, much to the chagrin of those dragons with access to the spell. It is likely that nondraconic versions of *hoard cache* exists, though they are most certainly high-level spells.

Breathmantle

(Evocation)
Level: 3
Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Special

Breathmantle is believed to be a draconic variation of the common *fire shield* spell, but it uses the manifestation principle associated with the *claw aura* spell. (See above.)

When cast, the dragon's entire body is shrouded in an aura reminiscent of its breath weapon. Thus, green dragons are enveloped in a gaseous aura, white dragons in a frost aura, shadow dragons in an aura of blackness, and so forth. Dragons with multiple breath weapons can choose between their available breath weapons that, once selected, cannot be changed. In any case, the *breathmantle* extends away from the dragon's body to a distance equal to half its fear aura.

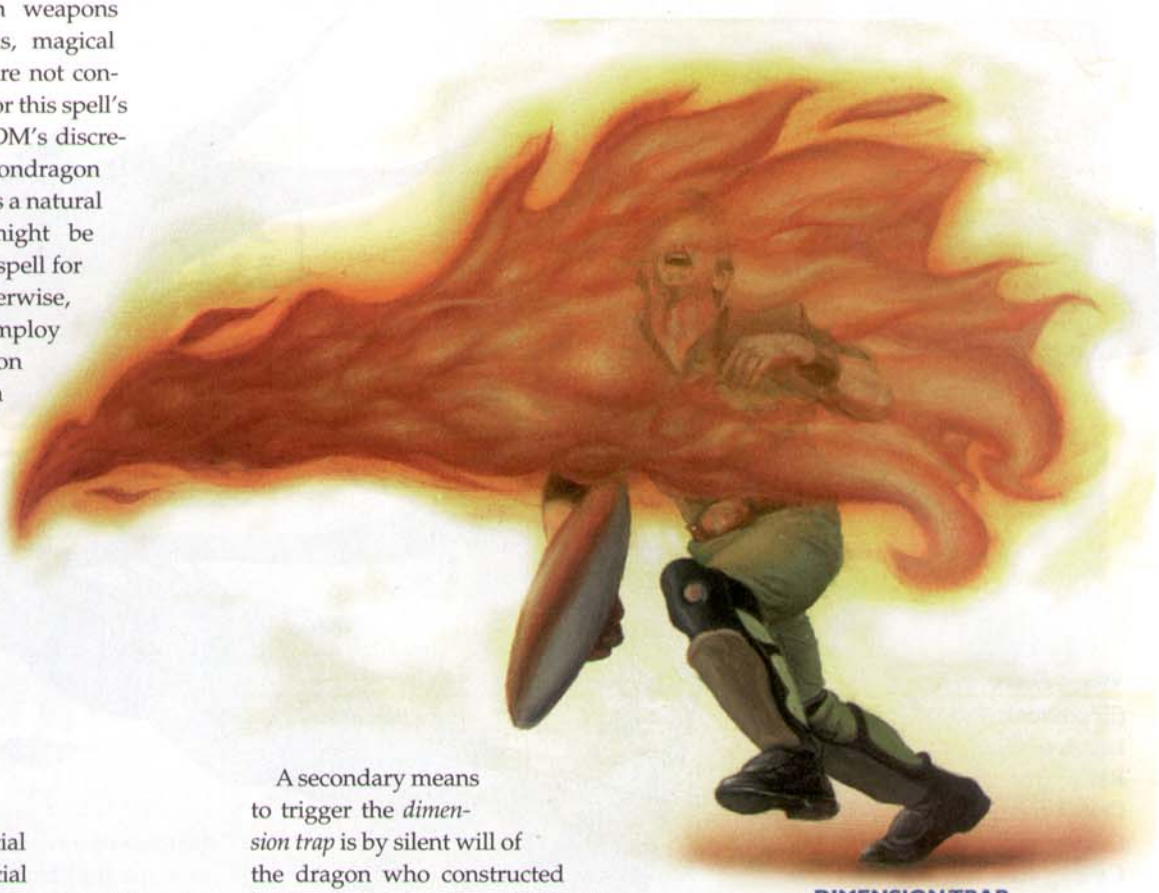
Like *claw aura*, a *breathmantle* has two possible results, depending on the duplicated breath weapon. If the mimicked breath weapon inflicts damage (such as fire, acid, lightning, and so on), creatures who come in contact with it suffer damage respective to the breath weapon. The *breathmantle* inflicts 1d4 damage points per age category. If creatures maintain prolonged contact with the *breathmantle*, the damage accumulates on a per round basis. A successful saving throw vs. breath weapon reduces the damage by half. Successful saving throws apply only to the damage suffered in the round in question, however, and new saving throws are required with each subsequent round of contact. Objects exposed to the *breathmantle* must also make saving throws accordingly.

If the breath weapon does not inflict damage (such as sleep gas, paralyzation, and so on), exposed creatures are affected as per the breath weapon effect. Saving throws apply where appropriate, but prolonged exposure requires additional saving throws for each successive round of contact.

Breathmantle can be ended prematurely by the dragon's silent command or if subjected to a successful *dispel magic* or similar effect.

Like *claw aura*, this spell has almost no value to nondragons, as the caster must be equipped with a natural breath weapon that the spell can mimic.

(Temporary breath weapons acquired via spells, magical items, or the like are not considered "natural" for this spell's purposes.) At the DM's discretion, however, nondragon casters who possess a natural breath weapon might be able to modify the spell for their own use. Otherwise, such casters who employ the draconic version suffer damage each round from their own *breathmantle* at a rate of 1d4 points per level or Hit Die.



DIMENSION TRAP

Dimension Trap

(Alteration)
Level: 4
Range: 50 feet
Components: V
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Special

This spell creates a special extradimensional space centered anywhere within range, as desired by the casting dragon. Once the dragon selects the location, it cannot be moved or changed. Within 1 round following its formation, the dragon must issue its breath weapon into the dimensional space, where it is captured and stored until the *dimension trap* is triggered. Only the dragon's breath weapon can be stored within the dimensional space—spells and other effects cast into the *trap* take effect as usual, but the dimensional space collapses and is wasted.

A *dimension trap* is triggered in several ways, but the primary triggering condition is the approach of intelligent creatures. If any creature with an Intelligence of Low (5–7) or higher moves within 10 feet of the *dimension trap,* the space collapses and releases the stored breath weapon. The dragon is excluded from this triggering effect, as are any individuals specifically named during casting. Only one such individual can be named per age category of the dragon.

A secondary means to trigger the *dimension trap* is by silent will of the dragon who constructed it. The dragon must be within 100 yards of the *dimension trap* to trigger it in this manner, but need not have a clear line of sight—intervening barriers and obstructions do not prevent the dragon's mental trigger.

Finally, the *dimension trap* is triggered if subjected to a successful *dispel magic* or similar effect. A *wish* or *limited wish* is necessary to eliminate both the *trap* and its contents.

In any case, creatures within 50 feet of a triggered *dimension trap's* center are exposed to the released breath weapon. The breath weapon's damage potential is the same as when it was initially stored within the *dimension trap*, though exposed creatures receive a saving throw vs. breath weapon to reduce the damage by half. Likewise, exposed objects receive saving throws as appropriate to the breath weapon in question.

Nondamaging breath weapons (paralyzation, sleep gas, and so on) do not physically harm exposed creatures, but their standard effects still apply to creatures within the 50-foot radius of the "blast" area.

A *dimension trap* is a one-shot event, dissipating once its contents are expelled. Multiple *dimension traps* can exist within the same general area, but their 10-foot-radius proximity trigger ranges cannot overlap—that is, a *dimension trap* will not form if its trigger range would touch the trigger range of a pre-existing *dimension trap*. Attempts to do so simply waste the successive castings. Areas affected by the release of *trapped* breath weapons can overlap, however.

The *dimension trap* persists until triggered or until one day has passed per age category of the dragon caster. In the latter case, the breath weapon is not expelled or wasted.

Dimension trap is useless to casters who do not possess a natural breath weapon (temporary breath weapons acquired via spells, magical items, or the like are not considered "natural" for this spell's purposes), though nondragon variations that enable a caster to store spells or other effects might exist.

WING RAZORS

Wing Razors

(Evocation)
Level: 4
Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Special

Similar in function to the draconic spell *sharpwings* (see *Cult of the Dragon*, page 41, for details), *wing razors* improves the combat effectiveness of the dragon's wings. *Wing razors* creates a layer of force-energy along the forward edge of the dragon's wings, from shoulder joints to wing tips. Although composed of magical force, the layer is flexible and in no way hinders the dragon's wing movements.

During normal flight and other wing movements, the energy layer remains flexible and resilient, but when the dragon's wings are extended for gliding purposes, the force-energy becomes semi-rigid, forming a beveled edge that effectively transforms the dragon's wings into a pair of enormous blades. The spell's combat application is simple: The dragon swoops down, glides low to the ground, and allows its wings to mow down targets. The energy layer itself deflects or absorbs the impact damage that such a maneuver might otherwise inflict upon the dragon's wings. Although the spell does not permit a damage-reducing saving throw; targeted creatures can make a Dexterity check. If it is successful, the targeted creature completely avoids the *wing razors* and suffers no damage whatsoever. If the Dexterity check fails, the creature is struck by the *wing razors* and suffers 12d4 points of damage.

A secondary, noncombat use for this spell is as a quick and effective means to fell large swathes of woodland or similar tall growth. DMs should limit the spell's usefulness against harder and stronger substances (such as stone, metal, and others), especially if such material would generally withstand or resist a dragon's natural brute strength, as opposed to its wings alone.

Like most force-energy spells, *wing razors* can be negated early with a successful *dispel magic* or similar effect, *disintegration* effects that specifically target the force-energy, absorption via *wand of force*, and the like, but otherwise last for the spell's full duration. Note that *wing razors* do not manifest if the dragon is already wearing *wing armor*. Conversely, an active *wing razors* spell disallows the use of *wing armor*, since the spell's force-energy layer prevents the *wing armor* from conforming to the dragon's wings. (For *wing armor* details, see *Dragon Magazine* #230, page 44, or *Cult of the Dragon*, page 98. Additional *wing armor* information is provided in the "DMail" section of *Dragon Magazine* #233.)

This spell is essentially useless to wingless creatures, though other winged races might have developed variants for their own use. Likewise, "touch" versions might exist that enable a wingless mage to transfer the effect to a winged steed or companion. In any case, however, it is likely that such variants are higher level, less effective, or both.

Robert tells us that, shortly after "Dragon Dweomers IV" was accepted, all of his remaining dragon magic notes (and a large pot roast from the freezer) disappeared from his home under mysterious circumstances. The only clue: A reptilian scale.

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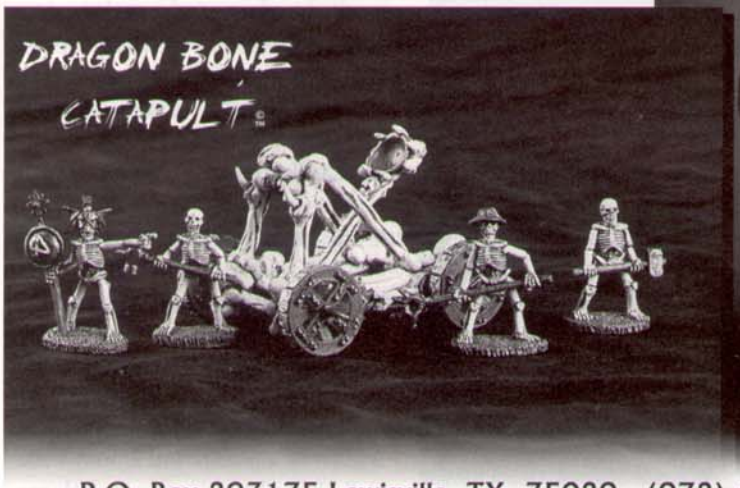

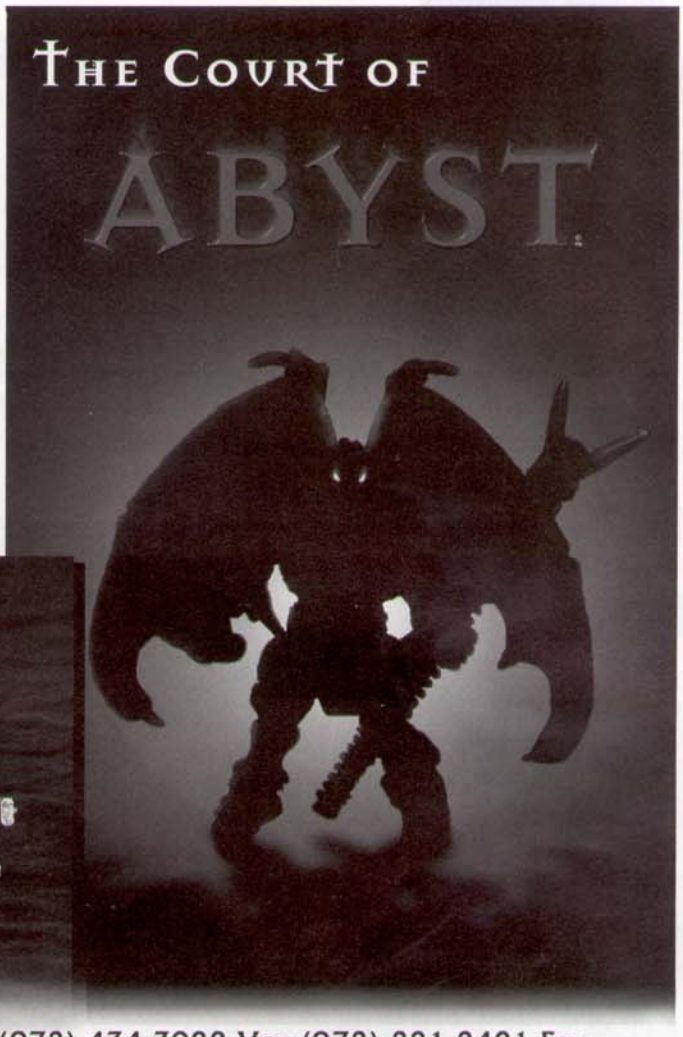

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The Planar Armory

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by Glen Jukes

illustrated by Shawn Sharp

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Arcadian Dwarven Hammer

The "Father of Battles," Clanggedin Silverbeard, designed the *hammers* to aid dwarven soldiers throughout the multiverse. As such, the weapons function as *hammers +1* in the hands of nondwarves. For dwarves, the *hammers* must be wielded two-handed, but they inflict damage as two-handed swords (1d10 points of damage to Medium-sized or smaller foes and 3d6 points of damage to Large-sized creatures) and operate as +2 weapons. In the hands of Clanggedin's priests, *Arcadian dwarven hammers* act as +3 weapons. Thirty percent of these *hammers* are intelligent.

One who possesses such a weapon is expected to use it at least weekly in battle. After three weeks of inactivity, the *hammer* magically disappears from the owner's possession.

XP Value: 3,000 **GP Value:** 18,000

Bytopian Flintspear

The *flintspear* is a primitive looking weapon popular among the inhabitants of Shurrock. The spearhead is a chipped hunk of flint and contains all the magic of the weapon. (That is, the spearhead can be placed on any wooden pole to work.) The unique characteristic of the *Bytopian flintspear* is that, when struck by steel, it bursts into flame for 3d10 turns. The inhabitants of Shurrock often use this ability in lieu of a campfire, since the process depletes no resources. In combat, the spear inflicts damage as a *flametongue* sword (+1 normally; +2

vs. regenerating creatures; +3 vs. cold-using, inflammable, or avian creatures; and +4 vs. undead). This ability works only while the spearhead is flaming.

Every week a *Bytopian flintspear* is carried, its wielder must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or her alignment shifts one step toward good. (Evil becomes neutral, and neutral becomes good.)

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 10,000

Celestial Sword

These weapons are beautifully crafted, typically with gold and gem inlays, but each of these weapons is unique. All of these *swords* are good-aligned. Any evil being touching one suffers 2d10 points of damage and is stunned for 1d4 rounds. (A successful saving throw vs. spell halves the damage and negates the stunning effect.) A neutral being who grips one feels nauseous as if affected by a *stinking cloud* spell until the weapon is released. (A successful saving throw vs. spell negates this effect.) A good being who touches the *sword* is immediately given the equivalent of a *bless* spell and is informed of the nature of the blade. Each *celestial sword* is aligned with its patron, a being of the Upper Planes, who makes a pact with the wielder through the *sword*. The wielder's side of the contract is that he will defend the cause of good; the patron pledges to provide the *sword's* wielder with special powers as long as he is true. The power of the *sword* depends on the identity of the patron.

Bonus	Patron
+1	deva, baku, ghaele eladrin, firre eladrin, lupinal guardinal, ursinal guardinal, sword archon, trumpet archon
+2	planetar, leonal guardinal, throne archon, tome archon, t'uen-rin, tulani eladrin
+3	solar

All *celestial swords* act as +4 weapons against fiends. In addition, the bearer shares the same immunities against certain attack forms as his patron. For example, a *sword* aligned with a firre eladrin makes the wielder immune to fire in addition to other immunities common to eladrin. The wielder is still affected by weapons of all kinds regardless of a patron's immunities to nonmagical weapons. The *sword* allows its bearer one of the magical powers of its patron once a day (for 3d10 turns where applicable). This could include the ability to use a spell-like power of the patron. Different *celestial swords* impart different powers, and this ability is determined individually by the DM.

Eventually, the bearer of the *celestial sword* begins to take on the appearance of the patron. A *sword* aligned to a planetar gives its possessor a greenish cast to his skin, and a *sword* aligned with an ursinal guardinal gives its wielder certain bearlike qualities. As part of the pact, the possessor cannot be raised from the dead or *resurrected*, as his soul has already gone to a celestial reward. Also, the dead body itself cannot be animated by a spell or come back as an undead minion.

XP Value: 8,000 **GP Value:** 40,000

BYTOPIAN FLINTSPEAR & FIENDBLADE

Fiendblade

Fiendblades are the opposite of *celestial swords*. They have fiends as patrons and act as +4 weapons against celestials. Like a *celestial sword*, the *fiendblade* distorts the wielder's appearance to resemble the weapon's patron. A good being picking up a *fiendblade* loses 2d10 hit points and is stunned for 1d4 rounds. (A successful saving throw vs. spell halves the damage and negates the stun.) Neutral and evil beings who touch the weapon become aware of the power of the blade and are

MODRON HEARTSPEAR

invited to take the pact. Neutral beings who accept the offer slowly begin to change alignment to evil.

Bonus	Patron
+1	amnizu, cornugon baatezu, babau, nabassu, wastrilith tanar'ri, kelubar gehreleth, yagnoloth yugoloth
+2	greater yugoloth, true tanar'ri, molydeus tanar'ri, pit fiend, gelugon baatezu, shator gehreleth
+3	Abyssal lord, Lord of the Nine, baernoloth

The wielder gains half of the patron's magic resistance. (That is, if the patron is a pit fiend with 50% magic resistance, then the *blade* would provide a 25% magic resistance to the weapon's wielder.) Owners of *fiendblades* are affected by holy items and water, and they can be turned as special undead by good clerics. Neutral and evil clerics cannot control them, however. When the wielder of a *fiendblade* dies, her body is immediately transformed into the weakest petitioner of the patron's home (such as a manes, lemure, or larva). Once this form is destroyed, the bearer's soul is transported to the patron's hands.

XP Value: 8,000 **GP Value:** 40,000

Flail of Apomps

Created by the shator gehreleths at their master's request, the *flail of Apomps* is a cruel weapon used only by the callous and spiteful. The head of the *flail* has three sides, each of which is inscribed with a rune that denotes one of the ranks in gehreleth society (farastu, kelubar, and shator). Each face of the weapon has a special ability associated with it, and, on a successful hit with *flail*, 1d4 is rolled. A result of 1 or 2 means the farastu face hit, a roll of 3 indicates the kelubar face connected, and a 4 means the shator face struck the foe. The farastu face requires that the target make a successful saving throw vs. spell or be *slowed* for 1d4 rounds. The face of the kelubar causes an additional 2d8 points of acid damage; a successful saving throw vs. poison halves this damage. The shator face causes *hopelessness* (as the *symbol* spell; a successful saving throw vs. spell negates).

In addition, the haft of the weapon has twelve names carved into it. These are the true names of various yugoloths. These names can be used for any spell requiring a true name. If one of these yugoloths is slain, its name fades from the weapon's haft. Once the names are gone, the *flail* loses all magical abilities. The *flail* inflicts double damage to yugoloths.

The *flail of Apomps* is a +3 magical item in most places, but it is +4 in Carceri. Gehreleths will not attack the owner of a *flail of Apomps* unless provoked.

XP Value: 3,000 **GP Value:** 20,000

Modron Heartspear

Made for the special "dozen-units" in the modron Army of the Blood War, *heartspears* are long, smooth weapons crafted of some peculiar metal that is unaffected by acid, cold, or fire. The *heartspears* are made for one purpose only: to slay tanar'ri. When a *heartspear* is used against a tanar'ri, it is treated as a *spear +4* regardless of plane. Against all other foes, it is nonmagical. Sages across the multiverse would like to get their hands on one to learn how the modrons subvert the reduced effectiveness of magical weapons through planar travel. However, the modron units are meticulous in cleaning their battlefields, making the *heartspears* a scarce commodity. The chant on their creation is that sometimes, when a powerful baatezu wants to punish an upstart inferior, it will throw the unfortunate into the energy pool of Primus. After a time, Primus becomes tired of holding these flawed souls in its person and crafts them into *heartspears*.

XP Value: 2,500 **GP Value:** 22,000

With 18 years of DMing experience, Glen Jukes is a great fan of the Planescape setting. He's excited about 3rd Edition because it gives him a chance to start a new home-made campaign, in which he'll continue to baffle the players by giving them magic items they've never seen before.

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by James Wyatt

illustrated by Carlo Arellano

THREE DRAGONETS, TINY VERSIONS OF THE AWESOME AD&D® game dragons, appear in the *Monstrous Manual*™ book: the pseudodragon, the firedrake, and the faerie dragon. These three creatures are not the only species of dragonet, however. Diminutive dragons like these inhabit every terrain and fill a range of ecological niches, just like their gigantic cousins.

Due to their intelligence and small size, most dragonets make excellent companions or familiars for wizards or other characters. A *find familiar* spell sometimes attracts a dragonet; a wizard can improve the chances of winning such an unusual familiar by adding 1,000 gp worth of appropriate components to the mixture of herbs and incenses used as a component for the spell. Saltpeter can attract a firedrake, scorpion venom a pseudodragon, and poppy flowers a faerie dragon. Crow's-nest dragons sometimes respond to powdered aquamarine, geyser dragons to sulfur, pavilion dragons to cinnamon, and mole dragons to powdered quartz. The wizard must cast the *find familiar* spell in a region where such dragonets normally live, and even then there is no guarantee that a dragonet answers the summons. (Ultimately, the DM decides.)

Even when not summoned and bound by magic, dragonets occasionally choose to become a companion to a character. This process is similar to that of acquiring a henchman: The character must win the trust and loyalty of the dragonet through words and actions, not the player's die rolls. Any sort of character, not just a wizard, can acquire a dragonet henchman in this way, and any kind of dragonet can become a companion.

Whether bound by magic or simply mutual agreement, all dragonets share an empathic bond with their companions. The dragonet can sense the emotional state of its humanoid friend and vice versa. This empathy is limited to a range of 240 yards. Some dragonets possess limited telepathic abilities, like the pseudodragon's ability to transmit what it sees and hears to its human companion. Details of these abilities appear in each dragonet's description.

Dragonets that have magic resistance (including all varieties except the firedrake and the geyser dragon) can extend this protection to a companion through physical contact.

One of James' PCs once killed a firedrake by casting sleep *on it while it was diving to attack.*

Dragonet, Crow's-nest Dragon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN	Coastal waters
FREQUENCY	Rare
ORGANIZATION	Flock
ACTIVITY CYCLE	Day
DIET	Fish
INTELLIGENCE	Average (8–10)
TREASURE	R
ALIGNMENT	Chaotic good
NO. APPEARING	2–20
ARMOR CLASS	6
MOVEMENT	3, fly 24 (B), swim 9
HIT DICE	1+2
THAC0	19
NO. OF ATTACKS	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK	1–6
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Dive
SPECIAL DEFENSES	Fog cloud
MAGIC RESISTANCE	15%
SIZE	T (2 feet long)
MORALE	Average (8)
XP VALUE	270

These coastal dragonets are known for their habit of following ships to feed on the fish disturbed by the vessel's passing, much like sea gulls. This has earned them their name, as they tend to swoop around the crow's nest of a ship and sometimes perch on it. They occasionally take seafaring wizards or other sailors as companions, becoming a familiar or henchman to such characters.

Crow's-nest dragons are small reptiles very similar in appearance to pseudodragons, though they lack that creature's poisonous stinger. Their scales are iridescent white, like pearls, and their tails are as long as their snakelike bodies, reaching out an additional 2 feet behind them. Their wings are long and wide, resembling a pelican's, but they fold them close to their bodies when diving for fish.

Combat: The crow's-nest dragon has large, powerful jaws with which it can inflict a fierce bite. They ordinarily swallow fish in one gulp, but a flock sometimes cooperates to kill larger fish such as tuna or even swordfish. Their favorite tactic is to dive from a great height onto their prey, attacking with a +4 bonus and inflicting double damage with their bite. Their small front claws are useless in combat, though a dragonet can pick up and manipulate small objects with them.

When threatened, crow's-nest dragons usually fly away. If pursued by a flying predator, however, they might use their ability to breathe out a *fog cloud* as a 9th-level caster. Although the cloud usually blows away quickly in the ocean winds, it can give the dragonets time to escape. Each dragonet can use this magical breath only once per day.

Crow's-nest dragons are speedy fliers and can swim fairly quickly at the end of their dives. They cannot breathe water but can remain underwater for up to 10 minutes in pursuit of prey.

Habitat/Society: Crow's-nest dragons occasionally respond to *find familiar* spells cast at sea or otherwise attach themselves to human or demihuman companions. They make excellent scouts for sailors, as they can transmit their bird's-eye view via telepathy to a single companion within 240 yards. Otherwise, their telepathic communication is limited to empathy, for unlike pseudodragons, crow's-nest dragons cannot transmit sound to their companions. Their vocal range is more limited than the vocal range of pseudodragons; they can only chirp in varying tones to make their wishes known.

Crow's-nest dragons tend to be loyal to their companions, though they are more flighty and chaotic than pseudodragons. They do not require as much pampering but are prone to mischief even when treated well. Their curiosity is insatiable, and sailors say their hunger is as well.

Ecology: Crow's-nest dragons build nests near the tops of rugged sea cliffs among the rocks. They mate for life, and a pair shares the responsibility of rearing the clutch of 3–5 young. They eat fish and cephalopods, but favor cuttlefish and squid. Large marine predators such as sharks or whales and aerial hunters like giant eagles or manticores are natural enemies.

Sailors consider crow's-nest dragons a sign of good fortune, and indeed some magical power seems to bestow protection on a ship when these dragonets are near. If a flock of crow's-nest dragons travels with a ship, the vessel's seaworthiness rating is increased by 15%, reflecting the fortunate influence of the dragonets. If someone aboard a ship kills a crow's-nest dragon, the flock departs immediately, never to return.

Crow's-nest dragons have a natural lifespan of 11–20 years.

Dragonet, Geyser Dragon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN	Geysers and hot springs
FREQUENCY	Very rare
ORGANIZATION	Nest
ACTIVITY CYCLE	Day
DIET	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE	Low (5–7)
TREASURE	W
ALIGNMENT	Neutral
NO. APPEARING	1 or 2–8
ARMOR CLASS	4
MOVEMENT	9, fly 24 (B), swim 24
HIT DICE	1–3
THAC0	1–2 HD: 19 3 HD: 17
NO. OF ATTACKS	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK	1 HD: 1/1–2/1–2 2 HD: 1–2/1–3/1–3 3 HD: 1–3/1–4/1–4
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Breath weapon
SPECIAL DEFENSES	Boiling blood
MAGIC RESISTANCE	Nil
SIZE	T to S (2–4 feet long)
MORALE	Steady (12)
XP VALUE	1 HD: 120 2 HD: 175 3 HD: 270

Geyser dragons are tiny, wingless dragonets that dwell (as their name suggests) in regions of geysers and hot springs. Their bodies are long and serpentine, and their legs are very short. Long fins trail out from behind their shoulders and hips, and they move with the fluidity of a swimming eel, even while flying or scurrying along the ground. Water vapor billows around their hot bodies as they move. Their scales are greenish blue flecked with silver.

Combat: Suffering from delusions of true dragonhood, geyser dragons throw themselves into battle, biting and raking with their tiny claws. More fearsome than their claws and teeth, though, is their breath weapon. Three times a day, a geyser dragon can project a jet of boiling water from its mouth, forming a cone 50 feet long and 10 feet in diameter at the far end. The damage inflicted by this water and steam depends on the size of the dragonet. A 1-HD geyser dragon causes 2d6 points of damage (half with a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon). A 2-HD dragonet causes 2d8 points of damage, while a 3-HD specimen causes 2d12 points of damage.

Like firedrakes, geyser dragons have hot and highly pressurized blood that erupts in a jet of boiling liquid and steam when the dragonet is struck by a sharp weapon. A character making a successful attack on the dragonet with a slashing or piercing melee weapon must make a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon or suffer 1d2 points of damage.

Geyser dragons are immune to heat-based attacks. Fire does affect them, but they gain a +4 bonus to saving throws vs. fire-based attacks and cannot suffer more than half damage from such attacks, even if a saving throw fails.

Habitat/Society: Geyser dragons live in springs warmed by magma. Several dragonets share a nest—generally a small cavern barely large enough for their coiled bodies—sleeping and mating at night. During the day, they swim in the boiling water, chasing steam bubbles, and come to the surface to hunt animal prey. Occasionally a hunting geyser dragon finds its way into a bath house or other human structure built around a hot spring. Overconfident in the extreme, a single geyser dragon does not hesitate to attack animals much larger than itself; these dragonets have an unusually high mortality rate as a result, though their natural lifespans are 21–32 years. Fortunately for them, they breed quickly and often, and they have few predators in their underground environment.

Geyser dragons have gills and nostrils, and can breathe air or water with equal ease.

Geyser dragons, believing themselves far mightier than they are, attach themselves only to human companions they perceive to be equally powerful. This means that a geyser dragon's companion is usually as boastfully arrogant as the dragonet itself. Geyser dragons can communicate via empathy with their companions but have no additional telepathic abilities.

Ecology: Wild and willful hunters, geyser dragons take what they can from the food chain, while often falling prey to larger predators. No wizard or alchemist has ever reported salvaging anything useful from a geyser dragon's corpse. Even their blood evaporates quickly when they are killed.

Dragonet, Mole Dragon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN	Rugged hills and subterranean
FREQUENCY	Very rare
ORGANIZATION	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE	Any
DIET	Minerals
INTELLIGENCE	High (13–14)
TREASURE	See below
ALIGNMENT	Neutral evil
NO. APPEARING	1
ARMOR CLASS	2
MOVEMENT	9, burrow 9
HIT DICE	3–5
THAC0	3–4 HD: 17 5 HD: 15
NO. OF ATTACKS	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK	2–8
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Bite lock, see below
SPECIAL DEFENSES	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE	20%
SIZE	M (body 5 feet, tail 2 ½ feet)
MORALE	Elite (13–14)
XP VALUE	3 HD: 975 4 HD: 1,400 5 HD: 2,000

Mole dragons are large, wingless dragonets that burrow in subterranean tunnels. They have thick bodies and short tails, and their front claws are huge, well-adapted for tunneling. Their skin is thick and bumpy, like a rough stone formation, and their scales glitter like chips of mica. As the dragonet ages, its hide becomes encrusted with gemstones, making old mole dragons appear to be walking treasure hordes. These gemstones are the creature's only treasure, amounting to 1–8 valuable stones for each Hit Die the dragonet possesses.

Combat: A mole dragon has heavy claws, similar to those of the common mole after which it is named. Their claws are too large and unwieldy to use in combat, but their bite is fierce. If a mole dragon rolls at least five higher than it needs to hit an opponent, it locks its jaws on its hapless victim and inflicts bite damage automatically on each successive round until its grip is broken. A single hit that inflicts at least twice as much damage as the dragonet's Hit Dice causes it to break its grip.

Mole dragons have no breath weapon, but they have a number of special abilities to compensate. All mole dragons can *dig* three times a day, affecting a 10-foot cube per Hit Die of the dragon, and they can *conjure elemental-kin* (sandling or sandman) once per day. Mole dragons with 4 or 5 Hit Dice can also *passwall* three times per day and *stone shape* at will. The largest (5 HD) mole dragons can cast *wall of stone* three times per day and *conjure elemental* (earth) once per week.

Mole dragons learn priest spells from the spheres of Combat, Divination, Elemental, Guardian, and Protection. They can use three 1st-level spells per day. Mole dragons with 4 HD gain one 2nd-level spell, and 5 HD dragonets gain two 2nd-level spells.

Habitat/Society: Mole dragons live in deep subterranean tunnels, burrowing through solid stone and wandering Underdark passageways. They are solitary, mating only on the rare occasions when two dragonets of the opposite sex encounter each other by chance. The female lays her eggs in a dead-end chamber and abandons them, closing the tunnel behind her and forcing the hatchlings to burrow their way out.

Mole dragons sometimes associate with duergar or derro for short periods and very rarely attach themselves to a powerful evil character as a companion. They cannot tolerate being above ground for more than a few hours, so they choose only subterranean residents as companions. When they have bonded with such an individual, mole dragons can telepathically transmit anything they hear to their companions, with a range of 300 yards. They also share the empathic ability common to all dragonets and use rasping growls and hisses to communicate simple warnings or displeasure.

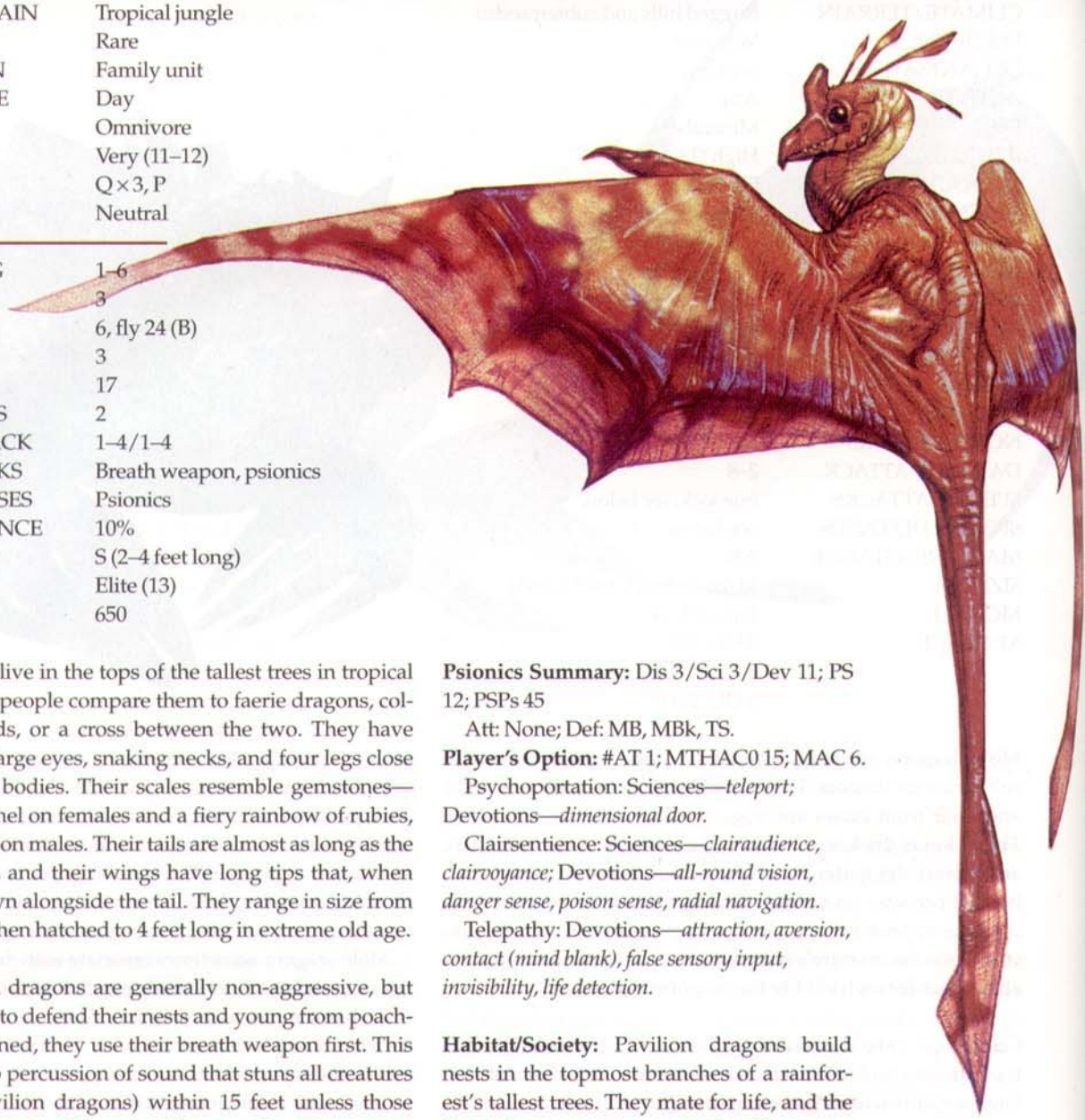
Where other dragonets are flighty and mischievous, mole dragons are dour and sadistic. They are also bitter and vengeful, nursing a grudge for years or decades if harmed or shamed by an opponent. Humanoid companions who do not share a mole dragon's love of inflicting pain soon find themselves on the receiving end of the dragonet's sadism.

Ecology: Mole dragons eat precious metals, digging along veins of gold or silver and leaving empty tunnels behind. For this reason, they are particularly loathed by dwarves and other mining races that depend on these metals for their livelihood.

Mole dragons have a natural lifespan of 41–50 years.

Dragonet, Pavilion Dragon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN	Tropical jungle
FREQUENCY	Rare
ORGANIZATION	Family unit
ACTIVITY CYCLE	Day
DIET	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE	Very (11–12)
TREASURE	Q×3, P
ALIGNMENT	Neutral
NO. APPEARING	1–6
ARMOR CLASS	3
MOVEMENT	6, fly 24 (B)
HIT DICE	3
THAC0	17
NO. OF ATTACKS	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK	1–4/1–4
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Breath weapon, psionics
SPECIAL DEFENSES	Psionics
MAGIC RESISTANCE	10%
SIZE	S (2–4 feet long)
MORALE	Elite (13)
XP VALUE	650



Pavilion dragons live in the tops of the tallest trees in tropical rainforests. Some people compare them to faerie dragons, colorful tropical birds, or a cross between the two. They have beaklike snouts, large eyes, snaking necks, and four legs close together on their bodies. Their scales resemble gemstones—dark blue like spinel on females and a fiery rainbow of rubies, jacinth, and topaz on males. Their tails are almost as long as the rest of their body, and their wings have long tips that, when folded, drape down alongside the tail. They range in size from about 18 inches when hatched to 4 feet long in extreme old age.

Combat: Pavilion dragons are generally non-aggressive, but they fight fiercely to defend their nests and young from poachers. When threatened, they use their breath weapon first. This weapon is a sharp percussion of sound that stuns all creatures (except other pavilion dragons) within 15 feet unless those creatures make a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon. Affected creatures cannot act for 2d4 rounds. Pavilion dragons can use their breath weapon three times a day.

In addition to their breath weapon, pavilion dragons have the psionic powers of 6th-level psionicists. They prefer the disciplines of *psychoportation* and *clairvoyance* above others and generally study powers of defense and escape. The powers listed below are common selections, but pavilion dragons have as much flexibility to choose their psionic abilities as any other psionicist character.

As a last resort, a pavilion dragon can attack with two claws as it swoops on opponents. These attacks each cause 1d4 points of damage. If both claw attacks hit, dragonets can carry off a creature of size T or S. They generally use this ability to carry off their prey. When faced with very small enemies like tasloi, however, they carry off their opponents to drop them from a great height.

Psionics Summary: Dis 3/Sci 3/Dev 11; PS 12; PSPs 45

Att: None; Def: MB, MBk, TS.

Player's Option: #AT 1; MTHAC0 15; MAC 6.

Psychoportation: Sciences—*teleport;* Devotions—*dimensional door.*

Clairsentience: Sciences—*clairaudience, clairvoyance;* Devotions—*all-round vision, danger sense, poison sense, radial navigation.*

Telepathy: Devotions—*attraction, aversion, contact (mind blank), false sensory input, invisibility, life detection.*

Habitat/Society: Pavilion dragons build nests in the topmost branches of a rainforest's tallest trees. They mate for life, and the female lays one egg every spring. The young remain with the parents for five years, forming family units consisting of two adults and as many as five hatchlings.

Pavilion dragons are prized as familiars and companions, though they do not willingly leave their homes. They bond so closely with humanoid companions that they share complete telepathy within a range of 100 yards, transmitting not only sights and sounds but also complete thoughts.

Pavilion dragons are the most even-keeled of all dragonets. They are fun-loving without being annoying, sharing warm humor with their companions. They delight in the natural beauty of their homes more than in pranks.

Ecology: Pavilion dragons eat a wide variety of large insects, small birds, eggs, fruits, and occasionally lizards and small monkeys. They have a natural lifespan of 26–35 years.

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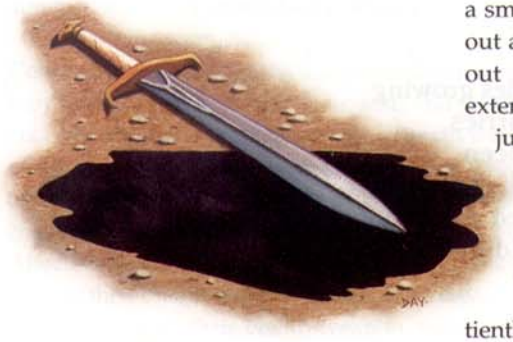
The Ecology of the Hydra
Heads and Tales

The secrets of a classic monster, now updated for a sneak preview of the 3rd Edition game.

by Johnathan Richards

illustrated by David Day

With a bump and a skid, the flying carpet came to a sudden stop at the top of the cliff embankment, sending the four passengers lurching forward to fall in a tangle of limbs. As the others struggled to their feet with poor grace, Dreelix reached into a pocket of his robes and produced his trusty gavel. Searching around for a reasonably flat rock, he spotted a suitable candidate nearby and snatched it up. Then, tapping the rock three times with his gavel, he announced: "This field session of the Monster Hunters' Association is hereby called to order."



"Hold on, let me get the others," said Grindle the Coin-Counter, reaching into a smoke-blackened pocket and pulling out a portable hole. While he spread it out flat on the ground, Zantoullios extended a bandaged hand to the Conjurer Ablasta, who was having difficulty getting up after Dreelix's rough landing. "I wish he'd learn to fly that blasted thing," she grumbled under her breath.

Dreelix tapped his foot impatiently as Grindle finally got the hole opened up and its passengers began disembarking. The first out was Buntleby, carrying Ozzie, his six-legged osquip familiar. He plopped the osquip down on the ground and griped, "How about a little more fresh air next time, Dreelix? It gets awful stuffy in there, you know!" Then, extending his arm back into the hole, he helped a young woman climb out of the extradimensional space.

The woman was quite a contrast to the bedraggled Monster Hunters. While they were all clad in wizards' robes, she wore a tight-fitting suit of black leather armor and had a large sword strapped to her back. Her auburn hair was tied back in a simple ponytail to keep it out of the way. She accepted Buntleby's extended arm and climbed up out of the portable hole. "Thanks, Bunt," she said with a smile. "So, this is where the hydra got the better of you guys, huh?"

"Down there, yeah," said Buntleby, pointing down the cliff to a cave opening several hundred feet below.[1] "And don't call me 'Bunt.'"

"It did not 'get the better of us,'" corrected Dreelix testily. "We wisely performed a tactical retreat in the face of unexpected obstacles to our meticulous plans. I would think even a simple fighter such as yourself would understand the difference."

1. A hydra prefers to lair in dismal, out-of-the-way places far from civilization. Marshes, swamps, remote mountains, and deep caverns are favored locales for a hydra den.

"Yeah, well, our planning wasn't really all that great this time, Rhionda," admitted Buntleby. "Usually, we have Willowquisp or Spontayne research whatever particular monster we're up against ahead of time. But they're both away at a sage's conference, so we had to wing it."

"Speak for yourself," snapped Dreelix. "I had everything all planned out—I mean, it's just a big, stupid reptile, isn't it? It shouldn't have caused us all the problems it did!"

"Maybe you should tell me just what exactly you guys did, and I can tell you where you went wrong," suggested the young woman. At that remark, the Ablasta's eyes narrowed in disdain.

Dreelix apparently wasn't too thrilled with explaining himself to a simple warrior, either. "You tell her, Buntleby," he said, turning his back on them.

"Well," began Buntleby, "we heard there was a hydra lairing in the gorge down there, so we rounded up a hunting party and went down after it."

"What type of hydra was it?" interrupted Rhionda.

"What do you mean?"

"There are four different kinds of hydras."[2]

"Oh, really? That's the kind of thing it would have been nice to know about beforehand," said Buntleby, frowning in Dreelix's direction. Dreelix, however, was looking out over the gorge, as if the conversation had nothing to do with him. "In any case, it was the fire-breathing kind, although we didn't know that at the time."

"Pyrohydra, then," said Rhionda. "One of the species some people believe proves a common ancestry with the dragon races.[3] Okay, Bunt, go on."

PYROHYDRA

Buntleby almost chided her again for using the nickname, then noticed she was waiting for a reaction out of him and ignored it. "Well," Buntleby continued, "Dreelix took us down to the bottom of the gorge on his flying carpet, and while the others readied their hold monster spells, I polymorphed into a goat to lure the creature out of its cave."

"So far so good," Rhionda commented, smiling. "I'll bet you made a fine goat."

"Sure I did. I approached the cave entrance, gave a couple frightened bleats, and the thing came rushing out at me, snapping its jaws in attack.[4] Dreelix and the others each threw a few hold monster spells at it, and it froze up. Then—"

"Wait a minute, Bunt," interrupted Rhionda. "Why so many spells for just one monster?"

"As a mere warrior, I wouldn't expect you to understand the intricacies of the magical arts," responded Dreelix with his nose in the air. "But a hold monster spell affects only one entity. This creature had eight heads. Therefore, it takes eight hold monster spells just to get all of the heads, and a couple extra spells just in case some of the heads shrugged off the effects. It's as simple as that."

"As simple, and as wrong," Rhionda replied bluntly. "I don't care how many heads a hydra's got; it's still only got one brain. You only needed one spell to affect all of its heads."[5]

2. The four main types of hydra are the common hydra, Lernaean hydra, pyrohydra, and cryohydra. Interbreeding between the species accounts for the Lernaean pyrohydra and the Lernaean cryohydra.

3. If so, the two species diverged long ago, for the hydra lacks the wings of the dragon and is significantly smaller than all known dragon subspecies. Beyond an obvious reptilian ancestry, the greatest links between dragons and hydras are the breath weapons employed by pyrohydras and cryohydras.

4. A hydra has as many Hit Dice as it has heads and attacks once with each head each round. (Pyrohydras and cryohydras can use their breath weapons instead of biting.) The hydra's backward-jutting horns are not used in combat. A hydra can bring up to four heads to bear against a single man-sized opponent.

A hydra's bite damage is determined by the number of heads it has. Hydras with 5–6 heads bite for 1d6 points of damage, those with 7–10 heads bite for 1d8 points of damage, and hydras with 11–12 heads inflict 1d10 points of damage with each bite. (In 3rd Edition, hydras with 5–6 heads bite for 1d6+3 points of damage per head, those with 7–8 heads bite for 1d8+4 points of damage, hydras with 9–10 heads bite for 2d6+5 points of damage, and those with 11–12 heads bite for 2d8+6 points of damage.) Note that this number is fixed at birth and does not change: Even if the hydra loses one or more of its heads, those remaining still bite for regular damage.

5. A hydra can be killed by either slaying its body or severing all of its heads. To slay its body, a hydra's hit point total must be reduced to –10.

To sever a head, an opponent must use a slashing weapon and inflict damage equal to the hydra's original number of heads in a single blow. (Thus, it takes 8 points of damage in a single blow to sever one of an eight-headed hydra's heads.) Excess damage inflicted on an individual head is not carried over to other heads. When all of a hydra's heads have been slain, the creature dies immediately. Some spells that involve slashing weapons—like *Mordenkainen's sword* and *blade barrier*—can also be used to sever a hydra's heads.

Despite having numerous heads, the hydra has but a single brain, located at the base of the necks. Thus, spells such as *charm monster*, *hold monster*, and *slow* affect the hydra as a whole. Similarly, instant-death spells (such as *disintegrate* or *slay living*) kill a hydra if it fails its saving throw.

Lernaean hydras, which regenerate two heads for every head severed, pose a more difficult problem. Flame or acid must be applied to the wound immediately after severing a head to prevent such regeneration (at least 5 points of fire or acid damage); otherwise, two heads form in 1d4 rounds. A Lernaean hydra's body is immune to all physical attacks, so the would-be slayer must sever and cauterize each of its heads in turn or employ instant-death magic.

"What?" sputtered Dreelix. "That's ridiculous! Nonsense!"

"Believe what you want. It's true, though. Okay, Bunt, sorry for interrupting. So the hydra freezes up ..."

"Right, so it's standing there like a statue, motionless. I resume my human form, and we move in for the kill. Grindle's got this long spear that he's going to stab into the beast's heart—"

Rhionda held up her hand to interrupt Buntleby again. "Another mistake," she said. "Always, always go for the heads. It's much easier chopping a hydra's heads off than it is trying to hack its body to pieces—the darn things are just too tough. And if you're close enough to stab at the creature, you might as well chop off its heads instead, since they're the part of the body that'll be doing you the most harm anyway."

"Who made you the hydra expert?" asked Zantoullios grumpily.

"Simple experience," replied the young woman. "I've fought these things before; killed both a common hydra and a Lernaean."

"What's a Lernaean?" asked the gangly wizard.

"The Lernaean hydra looks just like a common hydra: five to twelve heads, scales ranging from a grayish-brown to a darker brown, with light yellow or tan scales on the underbelly that reach from the bottom of each jaw to the tip of the tail, like a snake. The only real way to differentiate between the two is if you cut the head off a Lernaean hydra, two more grow back in its place."[6]

"Cute," commented Zantoullios, arching his eyebrows in disbelief that this slim young girl could handle such a monster all by herself.

"Well, anyway," continued Buntleby, "Grindle moves in with his spear, and the rest of us move in as well—after all, the thing's immobilized and shouldn't present any danger, right? Then, all of a sudden, a stream of flame comes shooting out of one of the creature's heads, engulfing Grindle in a ball of fire."[7] Grindle winced at the memory and looked down at his robe, now blackened and scorched by the pyrohydra's attack. "This was one of my better robes, too," he complained aloud to nobody in particular. He was right, too: This was his second-favorite robe, the one with only two food stains and armpit sweat-stains that were still imperceptible from distances greater than ten feet.

"So while Grindle's rolling around on the ground and the rest of us are trying to pat out the flames from his robes, Zantoullios stumbles into the range of another one of the creature's breath weapons, and he goes up in flames as well."

"Stupid monster," muttered the gangly wizard, looking down at his bandaged hands with a scowl.

"So anyway," recounted Buntleby, "by the time we manage to get the flames doused on these two, the time limit's expired on the hold monster spells, and the hydra comes waddling after us.[8] Without any more hold monster spells available, we weren't ready to fight the thing off. I think we hit it with a magic missile or two while retreating, but nothing serious. All in all, we were lucky to make it to Dreelix's carpet in time and get out of there in one piece."

"Sounds like you were lucky, all right," agreed Rhionda, shaking her head in disbelief.

"Look! There it is!" cried Dreelix suddenly, pointing down at the gorge. The others crowded over to the ledge and peered down at the multiheaded monster as it emerged from the darkness of its cave, tails twitching behind it.[9]

"Okay, the scale coloration should have tipped you off right away," said Rhionda. "Notice how they've got a reddish tinge to them? The pyrohydra's the only one with scales that color. Kind of helpful to know stuff like that before you go wading into battle."

"You forget your audience," remarked Dreelix haughtily. "Monster Hunters do not 'wade into battle' like mere warriors—it would be undignified."

"Whatever," said Rhionda, unimpressed. "Still, if you ever come across a hydra with a purplish tinge to its scales, it might be helpful to know that it's a cryohydra, capable of blasting streams of frost from its heads like a white dragon.[10] Of course, cryohydras usually live up in the arctic regions or sometimes high up in the mountains, and since they're the only kind of hydra living in those regions, if you meet up with one there you should already have a pretty good idea of what you're up against."

"Are they common?" Zantoullios wanted to know. "I've never heard of them."

"Not really," replied Rhionda. "Obviously, your 'common' hydra's the most common, followed by the pyrohydra, like your little friend down there. Lernaean hydras and cryohydras are the

6. If the Lernaean hydra has recently suffered such abuse, it can often be identified as such by its appearance. A neck severed near the base of the hydra's body grows two new full heads and necks, and appears the same as a common hydra. However, a neck severed near the jawline grows only two heads, each attached to the same neck. In any case, a Lernaean hydra has an "upper limit" of twice as many heads as it initially started with; after reaching that limit, a severed head grows back, but only singly. "Extra" heads shrivel up and fall off the hydra's body within a day after growth. Thus, 24 hours after combat, a Lernaean hydra (including Lernaean pyrohydras and Lernaean cryohydras) will only have as many heads as it originally started out with, or fewer if any of its stumps were cauterized in time.

7. Each of a pyrohydra's heads can breathe a jet of fire 10 feet high, 10 feet wide, and 20 feet long every 1d4 rounds. (Each round that a hydra can employ its breath weapon, it does so with as many heads as it desires.) Each jet inflicts twice as many points of fire damage as the creature's original number of heads. A successful saving throw vs. breath weapon reduces damage by half. (In 3rd Edition, the character would roll a Reflex save. The Difficulty Class [DC] of the roll is 10 + half the pyrohydra's original number of heads [rounded up] + the creature's Constitution modifier. Thus, to avoid a seven-headed pyrohydra's breath weapon, the dodging character must roll 10 + 4 + 5, or 19, on a d20.)

Note that the activation of a breath weapon involves the same muscles used in breathing. Thus, even a magically *held* creature can use its breath weapon as long as its mouth (or mouths) is open.

8. A hydra has a low center of gravity. Its four short legs are spaced widely apart, a result of the hydra's wide body. Because of the hydra's build, it seldom uses its claws against enemies, preferring to attack only with its heads. On the rare occasion that a hydra attacks with its claws (usually only against a prone enemy or as an act of desperation when most of its heads have been slain), it inflicts 1d8 points of damage with one set of front claws.

9. Most hydras sport but a single tail, but it isn't unusual for a hydra to have two or even three tails. The tails are not used in combat, and even Lernaean hydras do not grow back severed tails.

10. Every 1d4 rounds, each of a cryohydra's heads can breathe a jet of frost 10 feet high, 10 feet wide, and 20 feet long. Just as with a pyrohydra, a saving throw vs. breath weapon (or a Reflex save with 3rd Edition rules) halves the damage, which is cold-based in this case.

As arctic creatures, cryohydras are immune to cold-based attacks. Although reptilian, they have an insulating layer of fat below their thick, overlapping scales, and their scales magically deflect cold away from the creature. Touching a cryohydra's scales is like touching a sheet of ice.

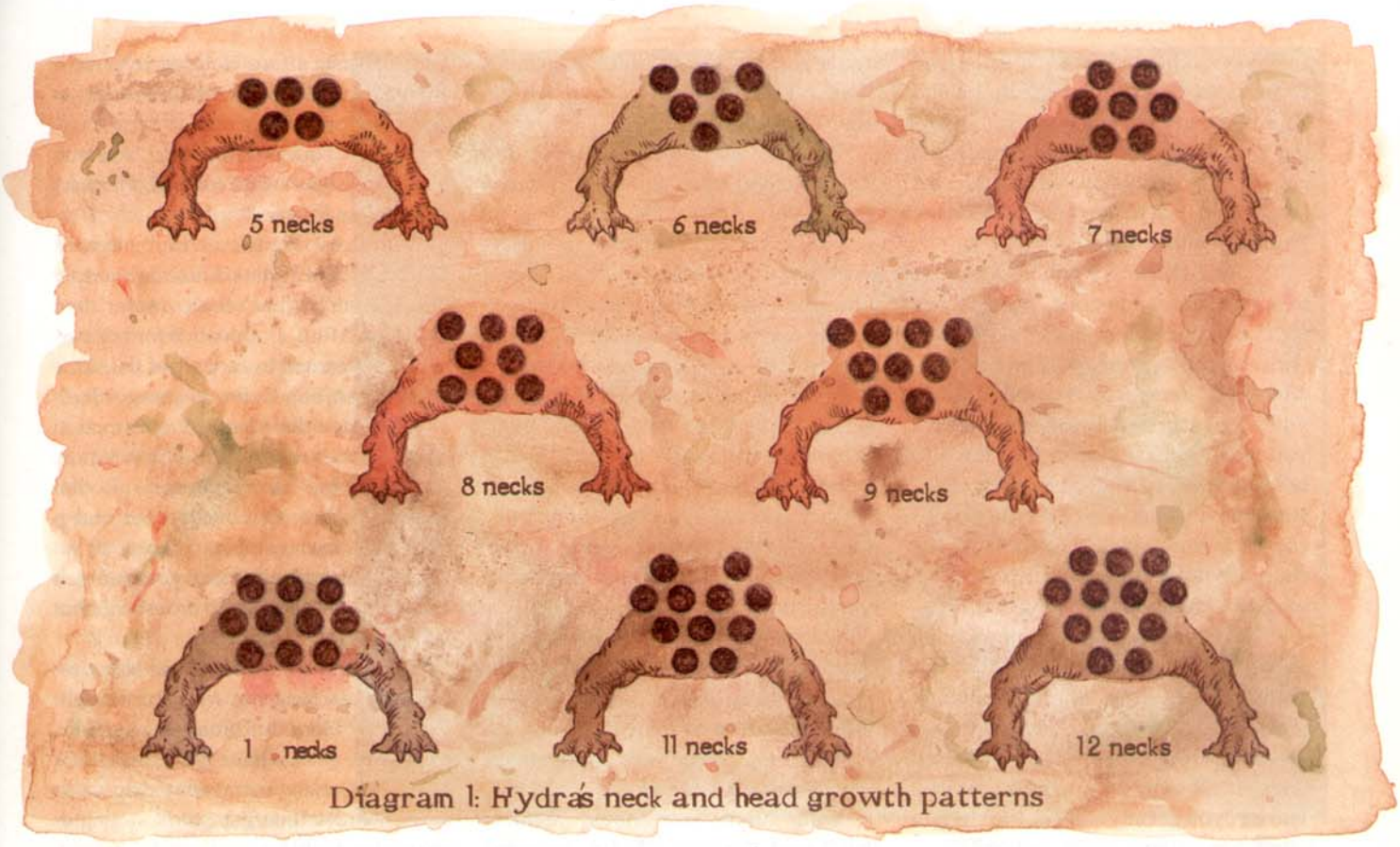


Diagram 1: Hydra's neck and head growth patterns

least-frequently encountered of all. And sometimes you'll come across two different types at once; those are usually a mated pair."

"Different hydras can mate together?" asked Buntleby in amazement.

"Sure. All hydras, regardless of species, are about the same size: thirty feet long or so. They can interbreed at will, although cryohydras usually don't intermingle with the other species, because of their different habitats.[11] Then there's the thessalhydras, which sometimes breed with regular hydras, but they're not true hydras in any real sense of the word.[12] Hey, look at what she's doing!"

"'She?'" repeated Dreelix. "How could you possibly know that?"

"Notice the horns. Females have shorter horns than the males. Not that it matters in combat; the creatures don't use their horns as weapons. But look: She's emerging from the safety of her cave, so what's the first thing she does? Points her heads in all possible directions, that's what. See how she's got her heads situated? She can pretty much see all around her at once that way."

"Probably looking for food," suggested Buntleby.

"Believe it or not, she's mainly concerned with looking out for other predators. Even at thirty feet long, there are plenty of other larger creatures that prey upon hydras—dragons, mostly."[13]

"Do you think it can see us up here?" asked Dreelix, suddenly concerned for his safety. It was obvious that their previous routing had made him jumpy where the hydra was concerned; he ducked his head behind a rock and peered out cautiously like a child peeking out from the covers at the imaginary monsters in his bedroom at night.

"Probably; a hydra's got pretty good eyesight.[14] But so what if she can? We're in no danger all the way up here; we're well out of the range of her breath weapons, and hydras are terrible climbers."

11. Female hydras lay small clutches of 1d4 eggs. In instances of mixed parentage, hydra crossbreeds usually take on aspects of both parents, as shown in the chart below, where H = common hydra, L = Lernaean hydra, P = pyrohydra, and C = cryohydra.

	H	L	P	C
H	H	L	P	C
L	L	L	LP	LC
P	P	LP	P	H
C	C	LC	H	C

Note that when a Lernaean hydra mates with either a pyrohydra or a cryohydra, the offspring have the characteristics of both parents; when a pyrohydra and a cryohydra mate, their "hot" and "cold" aspects cancel each other out, resulting in common hydra offspring.

12. The thessalhydra is a hybrid creature, resulting from the union of a hydra and the genetically unstable thessalmonster. The thessalhydra has eight serpentine heads ringing a large, circular mouth like a lamprey's. Each head has a poisonous bite and can spit acid, and the beast also has a pair of pincers at the end of its long tail. Thessalhydras mate with all manner of other monsters, creating even stranger hybrids like the thessalgorgon, thessaltrice, and thessalmera. Details on all four races of thessalmonster are found in the *Monstrous Compendium® Annual* Volume Three.

13. Dragons find hydras delicious. To take advantage of this, wizards and alchemists have devised a potion of *dragon attraction* made primarily of hydra blood and crushed scales, as well as certain glands from the hydra's body (those involved in the production of subtle pheromones). A single hydra can produce up to five such potions; when poured on the ground, a potion of *dragon attraction* brings any dragon within a mile in search of a tantalizing meal. The effects of this potion wear off in 20 minutes as the liquid evaporates.

If the potion is foolishly consumed, however, the hapless imbiber becomes the target of all dragon gourmands within a two-mile radius for a full hour. During this time, all dragons are convinced of the imbiber's tastiness and concentrate the majority of their attacks upon the delicious morsel before them.

Potions of *dragon attraction* carry a market value of 150 gold pieces. (In 3rd Edition, these potions can be created by a spellcaster of at least 2nd level with the Brew Potion feat.)

14. All hydra species have infravision (darkvision in 3rd Edition) to a range of 60 feet.

"Okay, so how do we kill it?" asked Dreelix, his desire to slay the hydra and gain its valuable body parts outweighing his general dislike for common fighters—even smarty-pants fighters who felt they could teach the mighty Monster Hunters a thing or two.

"That all depends. If you've got access to spells like disintegrate, then hey, go for it. Of course, that doesn't leave you with any body parts to play around with afterward. Personally, I'd rather go in with a sword: You always know where you stand with a sword. You throw a hold monster spell at a creature and it stops moving, but you never know if it's caught in your spell or just faking. But chop a hydra's head off with a sword—well, you know it's not faking that."[15]

"That would be excellent information to pass on to the Association of Hulking, Stupid Brutes With Melee Weapons," remarked Dreelix dryly. "We, however, are the prestigious Monster Hunters! Ours is the way of spell and finesse! Haven't you got anything else to suggest other than 'go stab it with a sword'?"

"Sword or spell, the strategy's pretty much the same," replied Rhionda. "If you'd rather use spells, I'd suggest magic missile, since it automatically strikes its target. Fireballs are good, too, if you've got the room; they're especially effective against Lernaean hydras, since the fire sears the wounds. Of course, multiple fireballs might severely damage the creature's body if you want to harvest it for useful components after slaying it; that's why I recommend magic missile. If you're using magic from a distance, it doesn't matter a whole lot, but if you're attacking with a sword, I'd recommend staying to one side of the hydra and picking off the heads on that side, in order if possible. That way, there are fewer heads within reach to attack you."[16]

"Why not just sever one head, and then let blood loss take its toll?" asked Buntleby.

"Nice strategy, Bunt, but it doesn't work that way. Unfortunately, as soon as a head is severed—I'm talking about all hydras except Lernaean ones now, you understand—the blood vessels close off the entire neck from the rest of the body. This not only stops the bleeding, but it also makes it possible for the hydra to pull its own neck stump from its body. Kind of gruesome to think about, but I guess it's better than dragging a dangling, headless neck around from your body all day."[17]

"Fascinating," remarked Buntleby. "I imagine it's very similar to the process by which many lizards lose their tails—if attacked, the lizard's tail snaps off, distracting the predator with an easy meal while the lizard gets away."

"Yeah, funny you should mention that," said Rhionda. "These discarded neck stumps are often subsequently eaten by the hydra, so everything gets recycled." Lady Ablasta gave Rhionda a look of horror at the mention of such self-cannibalization; she held a perfumed handkerchief to her mouth and looked as if she were about to be sick.

"You know, I've always felt the Association could benefit by opening its membership to more than just wizards and sages," said Buntleby to Dreelix. "Look at how much we've learned about the hydra already. And that's not just something that Rhionda read out of a book; it's practical experience. I'd like to formally sponsor Rhionda for membership into the Monster Hunters!" At that, Lady Ablasta's face clouded over as if she had just discovered half a worm in her cream puff.

"What?" squeaked Dreelix. "Are you insane? We don't want to open our ranks to mindless fighters!"

"Mindless fighters, no," agreed Buntleby. "But I think Rhionda's amply demonstrated that she's more than 'mindless.' Plus, I can vouch for her personally; we used to be part of the same adventuring band a few years ago. She's already provided detailed information on a monster useful to the Association; she's got me as a sponsor; all that remains is her membership fee and a vote by those members present at an Association meeting, and you yourself called this field session to order with that stupid gavel of yours."

"But—but—" sputtered Dreelix, desperately reaching out for a convenient excuse. "Her information remains unproven. All we have is the word of a *fighter*"—Dreelix managed to drip scorn at the word—"that her attack strategies are useful. Until her entrance fee is paid, the matter remains moot in any case."

"Just what do you plan on doing with that hydra if you kill it?" asked Rhionda suddenly.

"We're primarily interested in its blood," said Buntleby. "According to Old Gumphrey, our chief alchemist, it can be used in the production of healing potions of various strengths, hopefully without the wart-producing side-effects we get when using troll's blood."

"Yeah, well, a dead hydra's got lots of other uses," replied Rhionda. "Pyrohydra blood and scales are used in the production of fireball wands, and rings of fire resistance can be carved from pyrohydra bones or teeth. Likewise, you can

15. Obviously, *vorpal swords* and *swords of sharpness* are preferred weapons when going up against a hydra, due to their head-severing abilities. A *flametongue* has obvious uses against a Lernaean hydra, as it cauterizes the wound on any head it severs, thus preventing the growth of new heads; it also inflicts additional damage against cryohydras. Likewise, a *frostbrand* is a favored sword against pyrohydras.

16. Contrary to popular belief, a hydra's heads are not all lined up in a row at the front of the creature's body. Rather, they are staggered, as shown in Diagram 1. Note that the Lernaean hydra is an exception to this; while its original number of heads determines its beginning configuration, any additional heads grown (as a result of having a head severed without subsequent burning of the neck-stump) sprout from the remaining neck. Thus, some necks might sport more than one head, or they might split into a "Y" halfway up their lengths.

Spellcasters would do well to put some thought into a hydra's neck configuration when using certain spells against it. Spells centered on a single point might not affect all of a hydra's heads. For example, if *darkness* is cast upon a central head it should keep all of the heads "in the dark." However, if it is targeted upon an "outer" head, it's possible for the hydra to stretch its heads out far enough for one or two heads on the other side of its body to emerge from the sphere of magical darkness. Pyrohydras and cryohydras can target their breath weapons from any head as long as at least one head (not necessarily the one using the breath weapon) can spot the intended victim.

Similarly, care must be taken when attempting to magically *blind* a hydra. *Blindness*, being an Alteration spell (a Transmutation spell in 3rd Edition), affects all of a hydra's heads if the creature fails its saving throw vs. spell (or Fortitude save in 3rd Edition). On the other hand, *glitterdust* affects all visual organs within a 10-foot radius, so some of a hydra's heads might be within the area of effect while others are not. If at least one head is available to guide the *blinded* heads, the creature bites (and uses its breath weapons, as appropriate) with no penalty to hit.

17. The bones of each of a hydra's necks connect to the spinal column in the torso via a ball-and-socket joint. Once a head is slain, autonomic muscles release the neck bones from the socket, making it easier for the beast to rip off damaged heads.

craft a ring of warmth or a cube of frost resistance from a cryohydra's teeth or bones, and the cryohydra's blood and scales can be used to make ice storm wands. Cured cryohydra skin can be used to create boots of the north, but you end up with garish purple boots.

"Also, with the Lernaean hydra's regeneration abilities, it should come as no surprise that the creature's blood is used in making periapts of wound closure, or that rings of regeneration can be carved from its bones and teeth.

"Finally, there are my favorite magical weapons, the swords. Hydra blood is often introduced to the metal of a magical sword as it's being crafted: pyrohydra blood for flametongues, Lernaean hydra blood for swords used against regenerating creatures, cryohydra blood for frostbrands.[18] Of course, any hydra's blood will do for weapons specially crafted against reptiles."

"A particularly useful beast!" exclaimed Dreelix happily, rubbing his hands together in greed at the thought of so many magical items to be crafted from a slain hydra.[19]

"So, all in all, do you think the value of a hydra carcass would cover the entrance fee to your little organization?" asked Rhionda.

"Most certainly," admitted Grindle the Coin-Counter, who kept track of all monetary matters for the Monster Hunters.

"Good enough, then," said Rhionda and stepped off the edge of the cliff.

The Monster Hunters gasped as one—even Lady Ablasta—and watched in horror as the slim fighter plummeted, feet-first, to almost certain death on the rocks below. As they watched, though, Rhionda slowed her rate of descent and drew the sword from her back as she neared the ground. "Boots of levitation, I'll bet," said Buntleby with a sigh of relief.

Rhionda landed softly on the balls of her feet and raced toward the pyrohydra. The beast caught sight of her approach and hissed like a steam kettle.[20] It swung several heads her way and let loose with a couple jets of flame. Rhionda swerved around the flame-gouts without slowing her pace.

"We've got to help her!" cried Buntleby from the cliff-top. "Dreelix! To the carpet!" He jumped onto Dreelix's flying carpet and looked at the Monster Hunters President expectantly.

"I … don't think that's a good idea," said Dreelix. "We barely made it out alive last time. And anyway, we don't have any hold monster spells available, and Zantoullios can't cast any spells with his hands all burned like that in any case. This was only supposed to be a reconnaissance mission, so your little friend could point out what we should do the next time we attacked. I never expected her to—"

"Fine, fine, stay here then!" interrupted Buntleby. "Just give me the command words to the carpet, and I'll go down on my own!"

Dreelix crossed his arms and looked stubbornly down at his compatriot. "You know it's my policy never to lend out my personal magical items," he said. Buntleby ground his teeth and growled in frustration.

Meanwhile, down below, Rhionda had reached the pyrohydra and ran right up its left leg, putting her within sword-range of the creature's nearest head. A vicious swing buried the blade of her sword more than halfway through the beast's neck, and thick red blood spilled out from the gash. She pulled a dagger from her boot, slammed it deep into another neck, and used it as a handhold to steady herself as she swung her sword at the nearer of the creature's heads.

18. Rhionda is focusing just on swords; pyrohydra blood can also be used in the creation of any type of flaming weapon, just as cryohydra blood can be used to create any sort of frost weapon.

19. Hydra body parts can be used as alternate material components for several spells as well. The eyes of any hydra's head can be used for the *infravision* spell (the *darkvision* spell in 3rd Edition), but it takes both eyes from a single head, and they are consumed during spellcasting. The finely-ground scales from a hydra's back can be substituted for the granite and diamond dust used in a *stoneskin* spell without any lessening of the spell's efficacy. Finally, because of the fast-growing properties of Lernaean hydra head regeneration, flecks of dried blood from that creature can be used as an alternate material component for the *haste* spell.

20. The hydra's snakelike hisses are its only vocalizations; it cannot roar like dragons or other large reptiles. A hydra's tongues more closely resemble those of lizards than those of snakes.

An idea suddenly leapt into Buntleby's head: He snatched up the portable hole from the ground, held it in front of him with both hands, and took a flying leap over the edge of the cliff. Ozzie squealed in terror and almost leapt off the cliff after his master; only Zantoullios's sudden lunge onto the frantic osquip held him in place.

On the way down, Buntleby managed to scramble completely into the portable hole and pull it shut around him. Safe inside the extradimensional space, Buntleby didn't even feel it when the cloth landed on the stone floor of the hydra's gorge with a soft plop. He opened the portable hole and stepped out, a mere dozen feet from the pyrohydra. From this vantage point, the creature towered over the young wizard, amber eyes blazing with hatred like some fabled beast of legend.[21]

At first, he couldn't see Rhionda at all. Then he spotted her among the creature's writhing necks, weaving a bloody swath of death with her sword. Several of the creature's heads were already severed or dangling by little more than a thread; as he watched, the monster accidentally stepped on one of its drooping heads, and the neck ripped from the body to lie motionless on the ground.

Buntleby released the words to one of the few combat spells he had remaining: a stinking cloud that sent nauseous green vapors roiling toward the heads on the hydra's right side, while avoiding Rhionda, perched among the necks and stumps on the creature's left. That ought to slow it down, he thought.

No such luck; the pyrohydra seemed completely unaffected.[22] "Back off, Bunt!" called Rhionda, slicing deep into another neck with her sword. "I've got everything under contr—UHHN!" Distracted by Buntleby's unexpected appearance, Rhionda took a blast of flame to the side; losing her grip, she plummeted to the ground in front of the lumbering beast. With combat-honed instincts, she rolled quickly to the side, narrowly avoiding being trampled by the creature and extinguishing the flames at the same time. Her sword, dropped during the fall, clattered to the ground near the portable hole.

Buntleby pulled out his dagger, realized how useless it would be against the pyrohydra, and seriously considered turning tail and fleeing for his life now that Rhionda was out of harm's way. A gout of flame at his feet helped him decide: He turned and fled, wizard's robes flapping wildly behind him and the four remaining pairs of hydra jaws snapping at his own head.

Running full out and looking over his shoulder at the beast barreling down at him, Buntleby nearly tripped into the still-open portable hole but managed to dodge at the last moment with a great deal of arm-waving and dancing on tiptoes. The motion sent him off-balance, and he fell to his side with a whoof of expelled air. The hydra, less aware of the workings of magical items, failed to realize that the dark-colored fabric lying out flat like a rug between it and its prey wasn't really quite there; its front left leg fell into the extradimensional hole, and the weight of its body sent it sprawling to the ground.

Rhionda ran to Buntleby's side and pulled him to his feet, seconds before a blast of flame struck the spot where he had just been lying. "My sword!" she cried, pointing at the great beast. "It's pinned under her stupid body! How am I going to kill the silly thing without my sword?"

As if on cue, several magic missiles came screaming down from above, each striking the beast in a random location. Its four remaining mouths hissed in pain as wave after wave of magical energy pierced its body. Looking up, Buntleby and Rhionda saw the other Monster Hunters floating down from the cliff-top on Dreelix's flying carpet like some aerial cavalry. "Observe the mastery of magic over muscle!" called Dreelix, bringing the carpet to a rough landing on the ground. As the hydra dropped lifelessly to the ground, Lady Ablasta replaced her wand of magic missiles in the special holster on her left forearm under her puffy sleeve.

"I shall have the price of recharging my wand added to your first dues payment," she said frostily to Rhionda. "Grindle, make a note of that."

"Then she's in?" asked Buntleby incredulously, as Ozzie bounded up to him and licked his master's ankles in relief.

"Three to two," muttered Dreelix unhappily. "It seems she's convinced Zantoullios and Grindle of her usefulness to the Association." He gave a weary sigh. "Rhionda, I officially welcome you to the Monster Hunters and blah blah blah," he said, waving his hand in the air as if shooing away a particularly irritating horsefly. "Now then, let's get down to the business of chopping up this nasty beast; I want to get the goodies back to Old Gumphrey as soon as possible!"

Buntleby looked at Rhionda and shrugged. Rhionda shrugged back, then turned to pry the yellowish teeth from one of its severed heads.[23]

"It'll be nice working with you again, Bunt," she said with a smile.

"Likewise, replied Buntleby. And then, almost as an afterthought: "And don't call me 'Bunt.'"

Johnathan M. Richards is a big fan of Ray Harryhausen's animation techniques, and he remembers with great fondness the legless hydra from the movie Jason and the Argonauts.

21. The hydra of Greek mythology was a nine-headed Lernaean hydra with poisonous breath and venomous blood whose middle head was immortal. Heracles slew the beast by searing each head with fire as he decapitated it and burying the immortal middle head under a rock.

In a PLANESCAPE® campaign, this archetypal hydra probably still lurks somewhere on the plane of Olympus. Details on this creature are left to the DM's imagination, but suggestions on such mythological archetypes appear in the *PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix II*, under the "Monster of Legend" entry.

22. Though it has as many sets of nostrils as it has heads, a hydra has but a single set of lungs. As long as at least one head remains clear of breathing hazards at all times, it can ignore the effects of poisonous gases that must be inhaled to take effect. This ability also allows swamp-dwelling hydras to walk along the bottom of a lake or similar body of water if they keep at least one set of nostrils above the water line.

23. DMs might wish to allow hydra teeth to be enchanted so that, when planted in the ground and the command word spoken, they spring up as either armed and armored warriors (as in traditional Greek mythology) or skeletons (as in the movie *Jason and the Argonauts*). Several excellent ideas for the creation of such magical teeth appear in Gregg Chamberlain's "The Magic of Dragon Teeth," published in *DRAGON® Magazine* #98.

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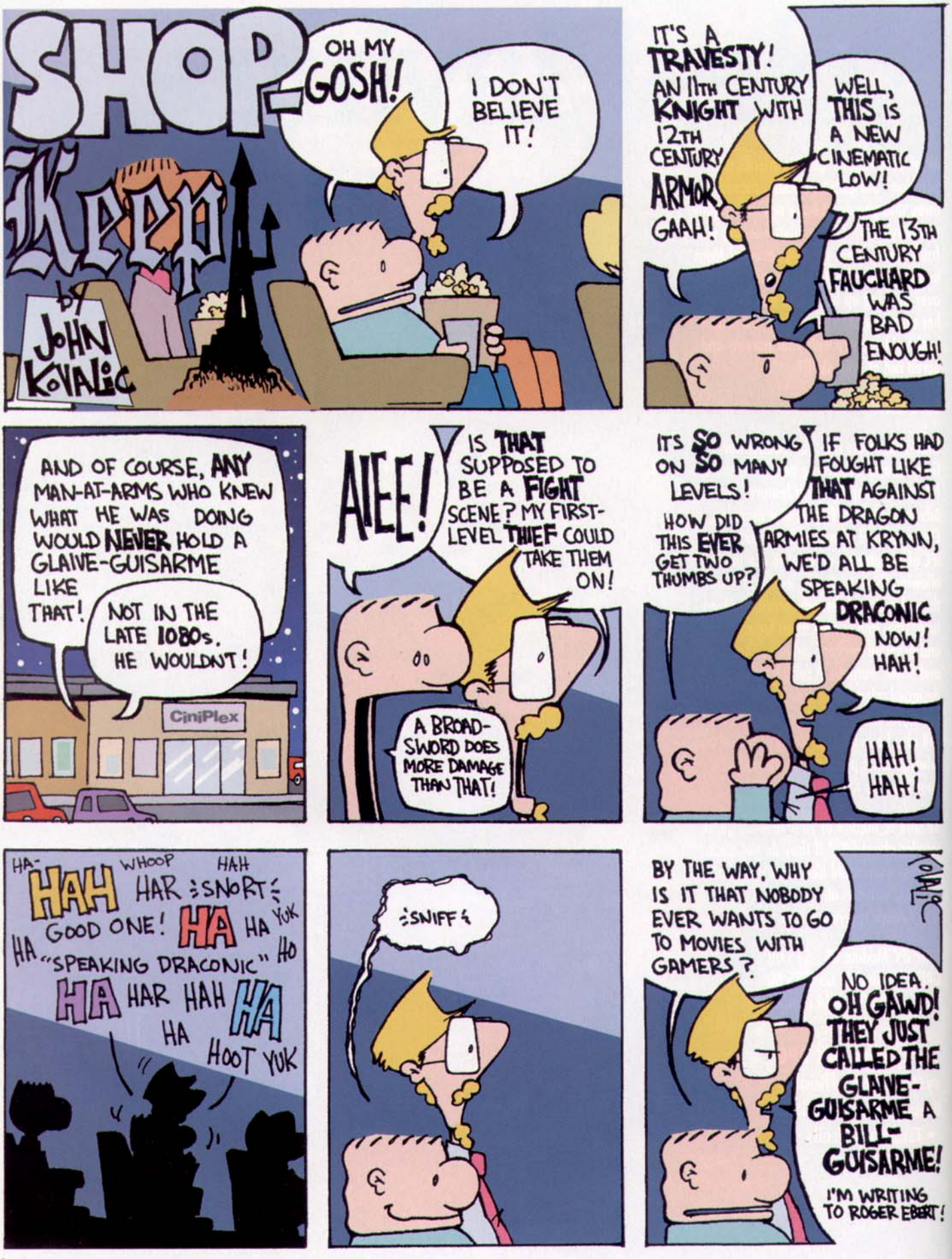
SHOP-
Keep
by
JOHN
KOVALIC
OH MY GOSH!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
IT'S A TRAVESTY! AN 11TH CENTURY KNIGHT WITH 12TH CENTURY ARMOR GAAH!
WELL, THIS IS A NEW CINEMATIC LOW!
THE 13TH CENTURY FAUCHARD WAS BAD ENOUGH!
AND OF COURSE, ANY MAN-AT-ARMS WHO KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING WOULD NEVER HOLD A GLAIVE-GUISARME LIKE THAT!
NOT IN THE LATE 1080s, HE WOULDN'T!
CiniPlex
AIEE!
IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE A FIGHT SCENE? MY FIRST-LEVEL THIEF COULD TAKE THEM ON!
A BROAD-SWORD DOES MORE DAMAGE THAN THAT!
ITS SO WRONG ON SO MANY LEVELS!
HOW DID THIS EVER GET TWO THUMBS UP?
IF FOLKS HAD FOUGHT LIKE THAT AGAINST THE DRAGON ARMIES AT KRYNN, WE'D ALL BE SPEAKING DRACONIC NOW! HAH!
HAH! HAH!
HA-HAH WHOOP HAR HAH SNORT GOOD ONE! HA HA YUK HA "SPEAKING DRACONIC" HO HA HAR HAH HA HA HOOT YUK
:SNIFF:
BY THE WAY, WHY IS IT THAT NOBODY EVER WANTS TO GO TO MOVIES WITH GAMERS?
KOVALIC
NO IDEA. OH GAWD! THEY JUST CALLED THE GLAIVE-GUISARME A BILL-GUISARME!
I'M WRITING TO ROGER EBERT!

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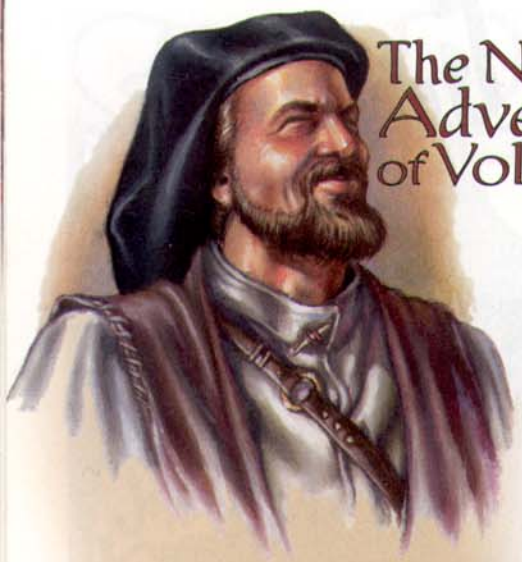


The New Adventures of Volo

By Ed Greenwood
Illustrated by Ron Spencer

Quotations of the Realms

Volothamp Geddarm at your service, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like those rare flowerings of words—mere curves of ink on paper—that move you to tears. Apt, that, for this time I've set down a few quotations that've caught my eye as I perused books (often tomes I wasn't supposed to see, but perhaps that's a road best left untraveled). There are a great many telling phrases and pithy quotes among the books of Faerûn, but I hold out just a handful here under a lofty banner: Wisdom shared is never a bad thing.[1]

For ease of reference, the quotes appear under nine subject headings: Adventures and Adventuring, Books and Reading, Castles and Crowns, Death and Doom, Love, Outrage, and Peace, Magic and Wizards, Men and Monsters, Walking and War, and Wolves and Women.[2]

Adventures & Adventuring

Screams, ye say? Can ye hear the clash of steel, some shouts, and a lot of rushing about? Ye can? Worry not, then—'tis merely another band of fools having "an adventure." I'll need help cleaning up … What? Why, the bodies, blood, and all the things they've gone and broken once they've done and rushed on to turn somewhere else in the Realms ground-over-sky, of course. That's the third lot this tenday.

Aglasz Jhavildar,
Sage of Teziir,
Lessons to Children, Volume IV

If it's spilt blood you want to see, go you to the marketplace of any fair town. There they lie, cheat, and stick knives in each other every day. Best come early—all idle folk in every such place know how good the show is, too. The crowd of bloodthirsty onlookers can make finding a good watching-spot a mite difficult, especially for an outlander.

Arglauth Melroryrr,
Sage of Mulmaster,
Arglauth's Guide to The North

Adventures? Call them that if you must. I prefer "forays into lawlessness" or "bloodthirsty and destructive raids," because I'm on this throne. Were I in the saddle I rode as a youth, I'd see them as you do. Try not to fall off and break your neck, now.

Azoun IV of Cormyr,
said to a young noble who gave "adventuring" as his excuse for slaughtering two-score cattle

Books & Reading

Books are wonderful. Men dead and dust for centuries can speak to ye across the years, displaying their mistakes and idiocies for all to read—so that new generations can learn to repeat them exactly, or with superb new embellishments of their own.

Blackthorn Belgadar,
A Merchant's Sagacity

Elminster's Notes:

1. Hmmph. He'll be sitting ye all on his knee, next.

2. In all his writings about the Realms, it's been the habit of Ed of the Greenwood to slip quotations from speeches and writings of the folk of Faerûn into the text; the lad's mad about it. I asked him once why he was so given to pestering me for endless snippets of the most portentous words of folk of another world. He told me 'twas "crucial to give Realms fans a taste of how folk think, and how specific characters sound." A good enough reason, I thought, and provided him with all he asked for and more.

In some cases, though, these pithy passages just don't fit in the space available; one such case was his amusingly inaccurate novel Shadows of Doom. Their disappearance didn't harm the action of that adventure one bit, but Realms completists who read this might now see the reasons behind the exact, sometimes odd wordings of the chapter titles. Ye gameplayers note: An interested DM can well use these snippets to "build" the voices of particular characters (a sage that PCs visit, for instance) or as snatches of overheard dialogue when characters are eavesdropping. Know ye that I built my present mellifluous manner on the gruff, grand pronouncements of others!

So I bought the wizard's diary, though the price was higher than for his spellbook. Of course, I hope to read his secrets in its pages once I defeat the spell-locks. It's why most folk read.

Vangerdahast Aeiulvana,
An Archmage's Life at Court

I never read. No good comes of reading. If ye don't believe me, look at all the folk ye meet. Mark ye—the ones that read'll be lawyers, priests, or wizards. See what I mean?

Dathlyr "The Hammer" Greybold,
My Adventures in the Realms, Volume I

Castles & Crowns

Castles are well and good for impressing people, covering over dungeon cells, and keeping all the neighboring rats dry. But if you've not the strength to hold them when some armed host comes to call, they rapidly become grand and expensive tombs.

Oren Bel Danarr,
Sage of Triel,
Musings on the Realms

The best crowns are the ones with lots of tall spikes and arches. When some thoughtful reformer or other thinks to take up a good sharp sword and separate the owner's head from its shoulders, all that filigree and finery keeps the head from rolling very far. Many good men have perished needlessly in the scrambling to lay hand on such moving crowns. For the same reason, no reputable craftsman will make a throne with wheels under it. So let's see lots of spikes and pointed baubles.

Ammathair Hawkfeather,
Great Sage of Waterdeep,
The Sharp Eye and Sharper Tongue: Observations of a Learned Sage

Crowns? Bright things that many men ache to possess … yet, I've heard, often find far too heavy to wear in comfort once they've gained them.

Dathlyr "The Hammer" Greybold,
My Adventures in the Realms, Volume I

Death & Doom

Death walks behind each of us, every day. Nay, don't look back nor try to run—none can outrun his fate, though many try strange and elaborate ways of doing so. Death is patient and comes for you when he's ready—oft when you least expect him and least want him. It's the way of Death.

If you'd embrace him sooner, you'll find that far easier. Simply walk down the throat of a sleeping dragon, or play at king-of-spells with the next Zhentarim of power or Red Wizard of Thay you meet, catch arrows fired your way out of the air barehanded—or assault a castle, single-handed. Some lucky few survive when they try one or more of these addle-headed things; while they yet live, we call them "heroes"—but patient Death catches up with them too, in the end.

Oren Bel Danarr,
Sage of Triel,
Musings on the Realms

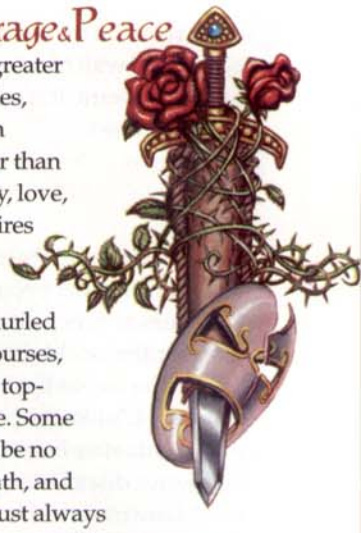
One man's doom is another's dream. Both are all about us, every day. It is one man's doom to wield magic and be outcast by fear, envy, and rivalry all his days. It is another's to be born poor, on a backwoods farm, with no chance of learning letters and turning his hand to anything grander than a plow. Some dooms are small: to limp, have graying hair when yet young, or have pimples. Some dooms are greater: to conquer a kingdom or be driven out of one, for instance. Even the gods have their dooms. How else do you explain the weather we've been having?

Oren Bel Danarr,
Sage of Triel,
Musings on the Realms

Doom awaits in strange, unseen places. Yours could be beside you now, waiting patiently to fall upon you at the right moment. But I've tarried overmuch and must leave you. Have a fair day, now.

Blackthorn Belgadar,
A Merchant's Sagacity

Love, Outrage & Peace



What is greater than armies, fiercer than storms, older than dragons? Why, love, of course. Empires have been raised—and razed—rivers hurled into different courses, and mountains toppled, all for love. Some say there could be no life without death, and that as death must always triumph, it is stronger. They are wrong. Love is what makes life. Love drives the living to their deeds, shaping worlds in the process. Love is the strongest. Never forget that, or your life is doomed to be a drifting, wasted thing.

Storm Silverhand,
A Harpers' Guide

Outrage? That's one of those overblown emotions reserved for fools who haven't been paying attention.

Elminster of Shadowdale,
Harping by Moonlight: Approaches To Life

Peace? Idyllic summer days of sun, bright hope, and plenty? It's a pity, but most folk can find those only in their memories—never in the passing days as they live them. Myself, I'm generally too busy even to store away memories.

Aglasz Jhavildar,
Sage of Suzail,
Lyres, Harps, and Horns: Sixty Years at Court, in Suzail and Elsewhere

Magic & Wizards

Wizard! Wizard! Call up thy fiends, and we'll watch pretty fire in the night!

Arkanuirr Tchellem,
Sultan of Tulmon,
Sayings of the Sultan: Court Records, Book 36

Magic creates, but it also destroys. Whatever ye use it for, it always, always transforms the user and that upon which it acts. Forget that at thy everlasting peril. Remember also that the mage who slays

with Art carries the weight of every slain soul around with him from the moment of killing onward. It is not a burden to be lightly assumed.

Elminster of Shadowdale,
A Myth Drannan Amphigory

The funniest thing I've ever seen? A confused wizard, of course. They just can't seem to believe it when spells go wrong or the world rises up and slaps them in the face at the height of their grandeur. It's like the puzzled look a rooster gets after he sits down and falls asleep on a discarded egg, then wakes up and discovers it. He walks around and around it, wondering if he laid it, somehow, when he was asleep. Half of him wants to run away and deny he was ever near the spot, while the other half wants to jump up and down and call to the world, "Hearken to me!" Oh, it's pitiful.

Ammathair Hawkfeather,
Great Sage of Waterdeep,
The Sharp Eye and Sharper Tongue:
Observations of a Learned Sage

All folk laugh from time to time, and none can say for sure what will unleash a man's mirth. Ye may have a gift to call up laughter. Good; but mind ye never try to amuse a mage. Why not? Well, just bridle thy tongue and take a good look at what makes them laugh. Do ye want to try such things?

Zanshareen Sabiyryn,
A Sage's Travel Guide to The North

The worst thing a warrior can do is start obeying a mage—any mage—without thinking about, and questioning, every order. 'Tis all too easy to slip into blind obedience, and that has brought war, doom, and hardship to many a land. Magic should not master men; men should hold sway over it. Mark this well: Other men must hold sway over the men who command the magic. Even better, women should control the men who wield magic, for that rule is the most tenacious and sure we know of. Be wise, warriors, and heed—or any reach ye make toward a throne will be short and fumbling indeed.

Rindala Shardroon, Sage of Immilmar,
The Book of Stars and Shadows

Wizards? Oh, they're brave enough with all their spells, staves, rings, and gewgaws, and dragons or worse bowing at their command. If you can take those away, though, what is left? A weakling with dandy's robes and one small dagger, likely as not—and he'll be a snivelling coward, to boot!

Dathlyr "The Hammer" Greybold,
My Adventures in the Realms, Volume I

Men & Monsters

Depend on those who are true to me? The "loyal and upstanding few"? How shall I know them until 'tis too late? Aren't they the ones who manage to make others forget that their fingers were ever on the hilt of the knife, ere it ends up in my back?

Daster Mremman, Lord of Sammaresh,
My Years on the Mantimera Throne

I see the scales, jaws, and claws that shout "monster" to most, aye, but I see more than that. I see that from among the ranks of men, who lack such trimmings, come the worst monsters.

Dazratha Alaemalarr,
Sage of Mimph,
Lady in Chains,
or I Say What I See

Walking & War

I like walking. It clears the brain—a good thing, if you've anything else to fill it with. If you don't, enjoy the scenery, I suppose. There are worse ways to waste one's time.

Thaulavvan Tridentstar,
A Ranger's Road

Oh, on a map it's but a skip and a jump—less of a journey than the width of my thumb. On a fast horse, it's torture on the legs and the bits you sit upon. On a slow horse, slow torture. Walking? Walking? Gods, but I grow old!

Ammathair Hawkfeather,
Great Sage of Waterdeep,
The Sharp Eye and Sharper Tongue:
Observations of a Learned Sage

My dreams were red and black that night, and I cried and cried until no more tears would come. What d'ye mean, "Who won?" No one wins in war. Haven't ye learned that yet? Just be sure ye kill the ones who started it. That means they won't be able to start the next one.

Of course, then the next war'll be the work of some other idiots. That, d'ye see, is what they call "progress."

Salhmitarr "Sage" Sorndar,
The Words of One Dwarf

'Tis bright morning of a grand new day. Make haste to waste it in the same old way.

Saying of the Purple Dragons
(and other guards in the Dragonreach;
originally from the lyrics to *The Ballad*
***of the Gallant Wastrels*, an ancient**
Cormyrean court song)

The night so long and lonely-o
Long time 'til dawn still to go
And I wait all alone-ee-o
Drink ye, drinky, gone below
For wet courage inside to grow
To face another sun and battle-o
It may be the last I'll ever see
Gods all now watch over me
As this lonely song I sing
For I would one day be a king …

From the mercenaries' drinking song,
Another Battle,
Come the Morn,
composer unknown

Wolves & Women

If you must war in the mountains and high forests, beware wolves. I speak now of the four-legged sort, of course.

Arglauth Melroryrr,
Sage of Mulmaster,
Arglauth's Guide to The North

That howling? Wolves—or folk caught in their jaws, who want all Faerûn to know they're dying. They could let me sleep, inconsiderate dolts.

Aglasz Jhavildar,
Sage of Teziir,
Lessons to Children, Volume IV

Never forget: In all but a few fortresses, the true lord of the castle is the lady of the castle.

Dazratha Alaemalarr,
Sage of Mimph,
Lady in Chains, or I Say What I See

Rest you, good lady. Your labors have been hard this day, and the gods shall not soon forget what you accomplished. A war begun, a throne overthrown, a temple plundered, a city in flames, and hundreds dead. Hmmm … after this, I hope you don't find the morrow empty and boring.

Jeremmer Hardree, "the Mad Jester"
What Came Out of My Mouth Too Swiftly[3]

Ed Greenwood lives in an old farmhouse with his wife and a cat, both of whom outrank him. He's proud to note, however, that he recently moved past the stone gargoyle in the garden in the household pecking order and is ready to start battling for precedence with the giant, blue, stuffed, cloth mouse bathroom doorstop.

3. Jeremmer said this to Maerildarraine, the self-proclaimed Queen of Ormpur, before all her court. He made this utterance at Torch Court (a short session held daily, just before midnight) on the twelfth day of Kythorn, in the Year of the Thunder (1306 d.r.), a day known to Ormpurrans thereafter as "Bloodsword."

Many wondered how it was that Jeremmer escaped with his life after speaking so to the wounded and visibly furious Queen. That was the close of the day upon which she slew her foster father, King Askulder, the "Hand of Tiamat," and led knights loyal to her against the royal temple of Tiamat in the city. Her troops set it afire and started a holy war that would, in time, cost Maerildarraine her life and throne, and reduce Ormpur from a great city to the lesser place it is today.

'Tis clear to me that they loved each other, Jeremmer and Maerildarraine. The man they called "the Mad Jester" (for his boldness in speech, risking his neck where others dared not) was court fool to King Naether, the uncle of Askulder, to Askulder himself, and, despite their often bitter exchanges, to Queen Maerildarraine until her final days. He took such wounds in her defense that he lay near death in priestly care when she was slain in her own throne room, fighting to the last.

She's known to have once dismissed an envoy with the words, "Rare idiocy you grace our ears with—but you've wasted your journey, sir. I'm attended daily by a better fool than you."

Gamer's Guide

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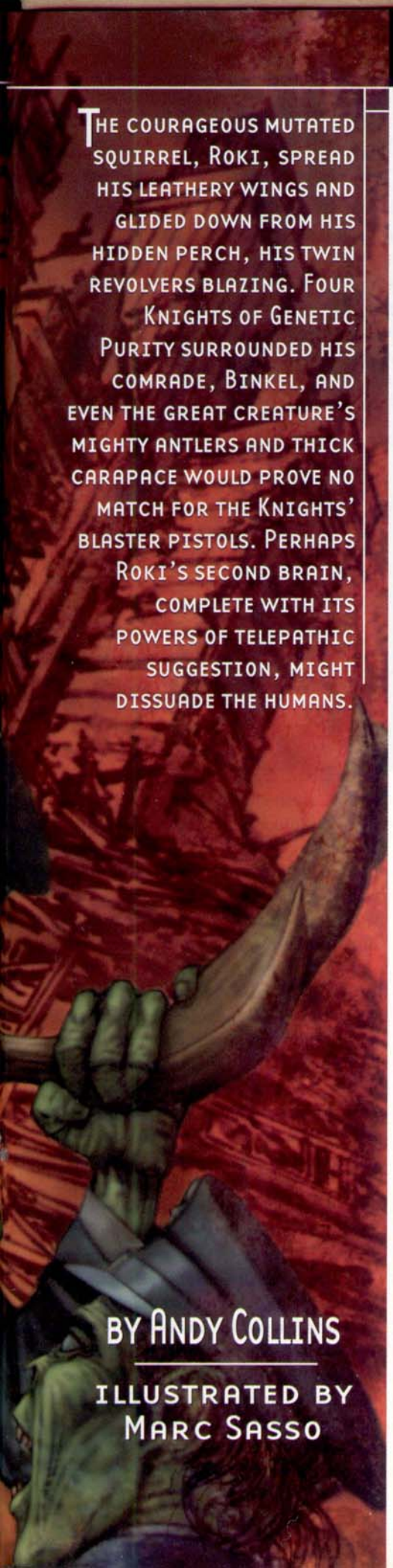


THE COURAGEOUS MUTATED SQUIRREL, ROKI, SPREAD HIS LEATHERY WINGS AND GLIDED DOWN FROM HIS HIDDEN PERCH, HIS TWIN REVOLVERS BLAZING. FOUR KNIGHTS OF GENETIC PURITY SURROUNDED HIS COMRADE, BINKEL, AND EVEN THE GREAT CREATURE'S MIGHTY ANTLERS AND THICK CARAPACE WOULD PROVE NO MATCH FOR THE KNIGHTS' BLASTER PISTOLS. PERHAPS ROKI'S SECOND BRAIN, COMPLETE WITH ITS POWERS OF TELEPATHIC SUGGESTION, MIGHT DISSUADE THE HUMANS.

GAMMA SQUIRRELS & MUTANT MOOSE

BY ANDY COLLINS

ILLUSTRATED BY MARC SASSO

The latest version of the GAMMA WORLD Roleplaying Game includes six species for use as heroes: humans, mutants, androids, dabbers, sasquatch, and sleeth. While these choices provide plenty of options for your GAMMA WORLD campaign—particularly one set in the grim and gritty Land of Settle—the allure of creating a truly unique character is one of the hallmarks of GAMMA WORLD past and present.

Here, then, are guidelines for creating your own mutated animal hero for GAMMA WORLD. In addition to this article, you'll need a copy of the new GAMMA WORLD game for reference (particularly for mutation descriptions).

SPECIES

Depending on the area of the world the campaign is based in (and what your Gamemaster allows), a nearly unlimited array of options exist for the mutated animal character. In general, all mutated animal heroes fall into one of the types listed below (with examples).

Amphibian: Frogs, toads, salamanders, and newts.

Bird: Crows, eagles, seagulls, owls, ostriches, and sparrows.

Bug: Spiders, flies, beetles, moths, and mosquitoes.

Fish: Salmon, trout, swordfish, sharks, and rays.

Reptile: Lizards, snakes, and turtles.

Mammal, tiny: Mice, rabbits, squirrels, bats, and weasels.

Mammal, small: Porcupines, badgers, wolverines, raccoons, and beavers.

Mammal, canine: Dogs, wolves, coyotes, and foxes.

Mammal, feline: Tigers, lions, cougars, pumas, and housecats.

Mammal, primate: Apes, monkeys, chimpanzees, and orangutans.

Mammal, large: Bears, horses, buffalo, and cows.

While other options exist—lobsters, slugs, octopi, and such—heroes of such unusual types should only be created through the cooperation of the player and the GM. (A mutated crab, for instance, could use the Bug template as a basis.)

Your choice will guide the rest of this process by limiting certain options while opening others. The "Species Notes"

SPECIES NOTES

In addition to the general information found on **Table 1**, *the following abilities are common to heroes mutated from particular species, most of which are (or were, prior to the Cataclysm) native to the Land of Settle and surrounding regions. If you don't find the species you're looking for, either modify a similar one or create your own special abilities using these as guidelines.*

Ant (Bug): Natural Attack (pincers). (If flying ant selected, gains bonus mutation—Flying; –4 mutation points.)

Bat (Mammal, tiny): Bonus mutations—Flying, Sonar. Bonus drawback—Diminished Senses, slight (sight only). –3 mutation points.

Bear (Mammal, large): Natural Attack (claws). Bonus mutations—Improved Senses (smell only), Environmental Adaptation (cold). –1 mutation point.

Beaver (Mammal, small): Character can move at full rate using Swim or Easy Swim.

Beetle (Bug): Natural Attack (claws). Bonus mutation—Dermal Plating. –2 mutation points.

Bighorn sheep (Mammal, large): Natural Attack (horns). Bonus mutation—Environmental Adaptation (cold). Gains –1 step bonus to Athletics–*climb* in rocky terrain. –1 mutation point.

Bull (Mammal, large): Natural Attack (horns).

Butterfly (Bug): No Natural Armor or Natural Attack. Bonus mutation—Flying (at half listed rates).

Chipmunk/squirrel (Mammal, tiny): Gains –1 step bonus to Athletics–*climb*.

Coyote (Mammal, canine): Natural Attack (teeth). Bonus mutation—Improved Senses (hearing and smell only).

Deer (Mammal, large): Natural Attack (antlers). Bonus mutations—Improved Senses (hearing only), Increased Speed (ground rates only). –1 mutation point.

Elk/caribou/moose (Mammal, large): Bonus mutation—Improved

Continued on page 101.

Table 1: Mutated Animal Traits

Type	Traits	Size	Movement Rates		
			Ground	Fly	Swim
Amphibian	Gills, Environmental Sensitivity, slight (arid)	Small	½	None	Full
Bird	Improved Reflexes, Natural Attack	Small	½	Full	¼
Bug	Natural Armor, Natural Attack	Small	½	Full	½
Fish	Gills, Natural Armor, Environmental Sensitivity, slight (arid)	Small	½	None	Double
Reptile	Natural Armor, Natural Attack	Small	½	None	½
Mammal, tiny	Night Vision	Small	½	None	½
Mammal, small	Natural Attack, Night Vision	Small	½	None	½
Mammal, canine	Natural Attack	Medium	¾	None	Full
Mammal, feline	Improved Reflexes, Natural Attack, Night Vision	Medium	¾	None	Full
Mammal, primate	None	Medium	Full	None	Full
Mammal, large	Natural Attack, Slow Reflexes	Large	¾	None	¾

Table 2: Mutated Animal Ability Scores

Type	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIL	PER
Amphibian	4–14	4–14	6–14	4–11	4–12	4–11
Bird	4–12	8–16	4–12	4–12	4–13	4–12
Bug	6–15	6–15	6–15	4–11	4–12	4–11
Fish	4–14	4–13	6–14	4–11	4–12	4–12
Reptile	6–14	4–14	6–14	4–11	4–12	4–11
Mammal, tiny	4–11	8–16	4–12	4–13	4–12	4–12
Mammal, small	4–13	6–15	4–13	4–12	4–13	4–13
Mammal, canine	6–14	6–14	4–14	4–13	6–14	4–14
Mammal, feline	6–14	6–15	4–14	4–13	6–14	4–14
Mammal, primate	7–15	4–14	6–15	4–14	4–14	4–14
Mammal, large	9–16	4–12	6–16	4–12	6–14	4–13

Table 3: Animal Mutation Points

Type	Points
Amphibian	7
Bird	4
Bug	4
Fish	6
Reptile	4
Mammal, tiny	6
Mammal, small	4
Mammal, canine	5
Mammal, feline	3
Mammal, primate	7
Mammal, large	6

sidebar lists many species of animal, but feel free to create something that isn't described there if you so desire (and the GM allows).

Note any special or unique characteristics about the species you choose, both from the sidebar and **Table 1: Mutated Animal Traits.**

Size and Shape

Despite the size of the base species, all mutated animal characters are a minimum of 1 meter in height. Those types listed as Small in **Table 1** are approximately 1 meter tall; those listed as Medium are between 1.5 and 2.5 meters tall, while those listed as Large are approximately 3 meters tall. Appropriate penalties to ability scores and movement rates are already part of each base type's attributes on **Table 1.**

All mutated animal heroes are assumed to be generally bipedal and capable of walking erect, though most species don't move at the full normal rate (because of size and/or difficulty in walking). See "Movement" below for more.

Finally, mutated animal characters are assumed to have hands capable of grasping objects and using tools. At the player's option, the character can be created without this ability (see "Drawbacks," below).

Abilities Scores

Divide 60 points among the six Abilities—STR, DEX, CON, INT, WIL, PER—and assign those Ability Scores to your hero. Make sure to arrange them so that your hero abides by the minimum/maximum figures for Ability Scores for the your hero's species base type, as given in **Table 2: Mutated Animal Ability Scores.** (Mutations and drawbacks can raise or lower ability scores beyond the listed limits.)

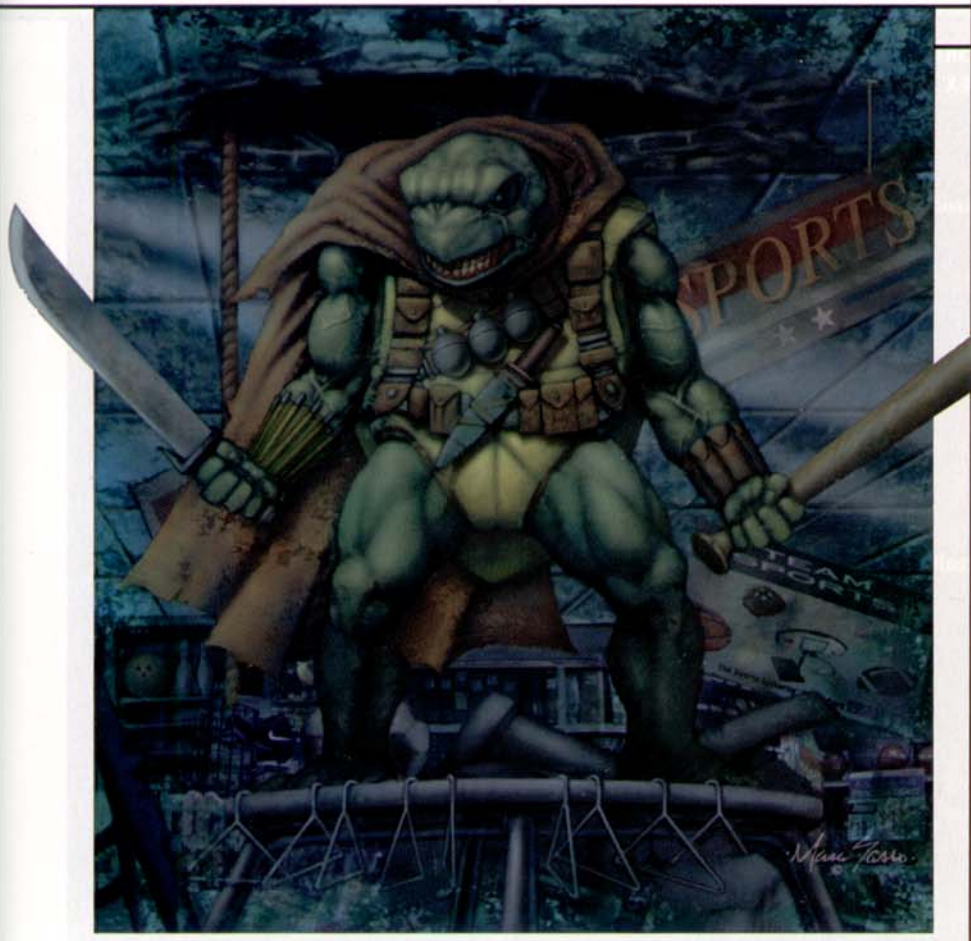
Mutations

Each mutated animal character has a number of mutation points as listed for its type in **Table 3: Animal Mutation Points.** In some cases, the animal's particular species might adjust this number up or down. This cannot reduce the character's starting pool of mutation points below 1 or increase it above 11. Regardless of the character's total pool of mutation points, remember that no character can have more than 3 Ordinary mutations, 2 Good mutations, or 1 Amazing mutation.

Drawbacks

Mutated animals have only 2 points of drawbacks (2 Slight drawbacks or 1 Moderate drawback). These are selected in the same manner as listed in Chapter 4: Mutations in the Gamma World Role-playing Game.

The player can, with his Gamemaster's approval, select the Poor Manipulation drawback, which greatly restricts the hero's ability to use his forelimbs to manipulate objects. The character suffers a +3 step penalty to any skill checks requiring manual dexterity, including (but not necessarily limited to) Athletics–*throw*, Heavy Weapons, Melee Weapons, Manipulation, Ranged Weapons, Vehicle Operation, Computer Science, Demolitions, Knowledge–*first aid*, Medical Science–*surgery* and *treatment*, Security–*set/disarm traps*, and



Technical Science–*invention*, *jury-rig*, and *repair*. (Mutated primate characters cannot select this option.)

In addition, all mutated animals automatically have the Physical Change (major) drawback. Thus, they suffer a +4 step penalty to Personality-based skill checks, as well as any other skill check made to interact with those who might find such deformities distasteful. At the Gamemaster's discretion, the character can reduce or ignore this penalty when dealing with similar species (for instance, a mutated raccoon interacting with a dabber). If the mutated animal character rolls or selects the Physical Change (minor) drawback, select a different drawback instead.

Traits

In addition to the mutation points possessed by a mutated animal hero, the "Traits" column in **Table 1** includes a number of naturally appearing traits common to mutated animals of each type. Most correspond to the mutation (or drawback) of the same name and are detailed below.

With the Gamemaster's permission, the player of a mutated animal hero can choose for his character not to have one or more of the standard traits. If so, they should be replaced by additional mutation (or drawback) points as appropriate. For instance, a mutated frog who chose not to have the Gills trait (normally an Ordinary mutation) would gain one bonus mutation point.

Environmental Sensitivity

Some mutated animals have a natural sensitivity to dry or arid climates. This is equivalent to the Slight drawback of Environmental Sensitivity (arid), which inflicts a +2 step penalty to all skill and action checks in such an environment.

If a mutated animal hero with this inborn trait rolls or selects the Environmental Sensitivity (arid) drawback, it automatically upgrades one level (to Moderate if Slight is selected, or to Extreme if Moderate is selected). If the Extreme version of this drawback is selected, the hero can reduce his pool of drawback points by two.

Mutated amphibians and fish have the Environmental Sensitivity (arid) trait.

Natural Attack (antlers) (replaces Natural Attack). –1 mutation point.

Fox (Mammal, canine): Natural Attack (teeth). Bonus mutations—Improved Senses (hearing and smell only), Night Vision. –1 mutation point.

Frog (Amphibian): Gains –1 step bonus to Athletics–*jump*.

Gorilla (Mammal, primate): Gains –1 step bonus to Unarmed Attack–*brawl*.

Grasshopper/cricket (Bug): Gains –3 step bonus to Athletics–*jump*.

Gull (Bird): Natural Attack (beak). Can Glide at 125% listed rate.

Hawk (Bird): Natural Attack (claws, beak). Bonus mutations—Improved Senses (sight only), Increased Speed (Fly and Glide rates only). –1 mutation point.

Horse (Mammal, large): Natural Attack (hooves). Bonus mutation—Increased Speed (ground rates only). –1 mutation point.

Hummingbird (Bird): Natural Attack (beak). Bonus mutation—Enhanced Reflexes (replaces Improved Reflexes). –1 mutation point.

Lizard (Reptile): Natural Attack (claws, teeth).

Lynx/bobcat (Mammal, feline): Natural Attack (claws, teeth). Bonus mutation—Improved Senses (hearing and smell only). Gains –1 step bonus to Athletics–*climb*. –1 mutation point.

Mink (Mammal, tiny): Natural Attack (teeth). Gains –1 step bonus to Athletics–*climb*.

Monkey (Mammal, primate): Gains –1 step bonus to Athletics–*climb*.

Moth (Bug): No Natural Armor or Natural Attack. Bonus mutations—Flying (half listed rates), Pheromones (affects insects only). –1 mutation point.

Mountain lion (Mammal, feline): Natural Attack (claws, teeth). Bonus mutation—Improved Senses (hearing and smell only). Gains –1 step bonus to Athletics–*climb*. –1 mutation point.

Mouse/shrew/rat (Mammal, tiny): Gains –1 step bonus to Stealth–*hide* and *sneak*.

Otter (Mammal, small): Character can move at full rate using Swim or Easy Swim.

Continued on page 103.

Table 4: Mutated Animal Free Broad Skills

	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIL	PER
Amphibian	Athletics	–	Movement–*swim* Stamina	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Bird	Athletics Unarmed Attack	Acrobatics	–	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Bug	Athletics* Unarmed Attack	–	Stamina	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Fish	Athletics	–	Movement–*swim* Stamina	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Reptile	Athletics Unarmed Attack	–	Stamina	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Mammal, tiny	Athletics	Stealth	Survival	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Mammal, small	Athletics	–	Stamina Survival	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Mammal, canine	Athletics Unarmed Attack	–	Stamina	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Mammal, feline	Athletics Unarmed Attack	–	Stamina	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Mammal, primate	Athletics	–	Stamina Survival	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Mammal, large	Athletics	–	Stamina	Knowledge	Awareness, Resolve	Interaction

*If the hero is of a flying species, substitute Acrobatics for Athletics.

Gills

If a mutated animal character has **gills** (listed on **Table 1**), that character automatically begins with the Gills mutation. If the Gills mutation is rolled or selected, reroll or choose a different Ordinary mutation.

Mutated amphibians and fish have the Gills trait.

Improved Reflexes

Some mutated animals retain their ancestor's lightning-quick reflexes, granting them the equivalent of the Improved Reflexes mutation. This grants a –1 step bonus to all action checks .

If a mutated animal hero with this trait rolls or selects the Improved Reflexes mutation, it becomes the Enhanced Reflexes mutation at no additional cost. If he rolls or selects the Enhanced Reflexes mutation, it becomes the Hyper Reflexes mutation at the cost of 1 additional mutation point.

Mutated birds and felines have the Improved Reflexes trait.

Natural Armor

A mutated animal with Natural Armor has armor equivalent to the Dermal Reinforcement mutation (d4+1/d4/d4–1). If a mutated animal hero with Natural Armor rolls or selects the Dermal Reinforcement or Dermal Armor mutation, she replaces it with the Dermal Armor or Dermal Plating mutation, respectively (at no additional cost of mutation points).

If a mutated animal hero with natural armor rolls or selects the Dermal Plating mutation, she upgrades her Natural Armor to Dermal Plating and gains one bonus mutation point.

Mutated fish, insects, and reptiles have the Natural Armor trait.

Natural Attack

If a mutated animal hero with Natural Attack rolls the Natural Attack mutation, he replaces it with Improved Natural Attack at no additional cost in mutation points.

If a mutated animal hero with Natural Attack rolls or selects the Improved Natural Attack mutation, he upgrades his Natural Attack to Improved Natural Attack and gains one bonus mutation point.

Mutated birds, bugs, reptiles, small mammals, canines, felines, and large mammals have the Natural Attack trait.

Night Vision

Some mutated animals have eyes abnormally sensitive to light. This is equivalent

to the Night Vision mutation. If the mutated animal character rolls or selects the Night Vision mutation, reroll or choose a different Ordinary mutation.

Tiny and small mammals and felines have the Night Vision trait.

Profession

Using the GAMMA WORLD Roleplaying Game, select a profession—Combat Spec, Diplomat, Free Agent, or Tech Op—that logically encompasses your hero's character concept. Each profession provides special benefits to the heroes who belong to it, as described in the game.

Most mutated animals will tend toward professions that maximize the utility of their abilities; for instance, mutated bears generally make better Combat Specs than Free Agents. Don't let that stop you from making a unique character, though—if you want your mutated mouse to be a Combat Spec, go for it!

Skills

Like other GAMMA WORLD heroes, mutated animals get six free broad skills. These are listed in **Table 4: Mutated Animal Broad Skills.** Note that amphibian and fish heroes gain one free rank of Movement–*swim* in addition to their free broad skills.

The number of additional broad skills your mutated animal hero can start with, and the number of points he receives to purchase additional skills, depend on the hero's species and Intelligence score. **Table GW42: Skill List** in Chapter 5: Skills of the GAMMA WORLD Roleplaying Game contains complete information on how much skills cost and what each one enables a hero to do.

ATTRIBUTES

Choose one motivation, one moral attitude, and up to two character traits (found in the GAMMA WORLD Roleplaying Game) for your hero. Most mutated animals tend to have traits that match their base species. For instance, mutated wolves tend to be Aggressive while mutated songbirds are often Talkative.

However, playing a mutated animal hero that dosent fit the normal mold can be very enjoyable. For a change of pace, try a mutated cougar who is Compassionate and Kind or a mutated rabbit who is Calm and Courageous!

MOVEMENT

Though more-or-less bipedal, mutated animal characters still don't move as quickly as their more-evolved comrades. Multiply the character's normal ground movement rates (as determined by **Table GW7: Combat Movement Rates**) by the value listed on **Table 1** to find her Sprint, Run, and Walk rates.

At a cost of 1 mutation point, you can choose for the mutated animal character to be fully bipedal. This allows her to move at the full normal rates listed on **Table GW7**. (This doesn't apply to mutated primates, who are already fully bipedal.)

Flying

Mutated animals with "Full" listed under Fly on **Table 1** are assumed to have full-size functional wings (in effect, they have the built-in mutation of Wings). If a flying mutated animal rolls or selects the Gliding mutation, he increases his Glide movement rate by 50%.

If such a hero rolls or selects the Wings mutation, he increases both his Glide and Fly movement rates by 100%. He does not incur the modifiers to his ability scores listed under the Wings mutation.

The player of such a character may voluntarily choose that his character's wings are non-functional. In this case, he gains 2 bonus mutation points.

Swimming

Most mutated animals can swim, though with some difficulty. If a fractional value is listed, the character is capable only of the Easy Swim rate (unless she gains ranks in Movement–*swim*), and even then her movement rate is determined by multiplying the Easy Swim (or Swim) rate by the fractional value listed.

If Full is listed, the animal can move at the Easy Swim or Swim rates. If Double is listed, the animal can move at double the Easy Swim or Swim rates and gains a –2 step bonus to any Movement–*swim* skill checks.

Learn more about Andy Collins on page 18.

Owl (Bird): Natural Attack (claws, beak). Bonus mutation—Night Vision. –1 mutation point.

Porcupine (Mammal, small): Bonus mutation—Natural Attack (quills). –2 mutation points.

Rabbit (Mammal, tiny): Character's ground movement rates multiplied by $^3/_4$, not $^1/_2$ as listed in Table 1

Raccoon (Mammal, small): Bonus mutation—Night Vision. –1 mutation point.

Salmon (Fish): Can breathe air normally. (This trait is common to all mutated fish characters.)

Skunk (Mammal, small): Bonus mutation—Stench Attack (inhaled irritant). As Poison Attack, but lasts until washed off (maximum of 48 hours). Bonus drawback: Attraction Odor. –2 mutation points.

Snake, nonvenomous (Reptile): Natural Attack (fangs). Maximum Strength is 15.

Snake, venomous (Reptile): Natural Attack (fangs). Bonus mutation—Poison Attack (hemotoxin). –3 mutation points.

Spider (Bug): Natural Attack (sting). Bonus mutation—Poison Attack (necrotoxin). Gains –1 step bonus to Athletics–*climb*. –3 mutation points.

Squirrel, flying (Mammal, tiny): Can Glide at listed rate. If Gliding mutation selected, upgrade to Fly at no extra cost. If Flying mutation selected, gain 2 bonus mutation points. Gains –1 step bonus to Athletics–climb. –2 mutation points.

Toad (Amphibian): Gains –1 step bonus to Athletics–*jump*. Does not have drawback of Environmental Sensitivity, slight (arid). –1 mutation point.

Turtle (Reptile): Bonus mutation—Dermal Plating (replaces Natural Armor). –3 mutation points.

Wolf (Mammal, canine): Natural Attack (teeth). Bonus mutations—Improved Senses (hearing and smell only), Improved Speed. –1 mutation point.

Wolverine (Mammal, small): Bonus mutation—Improved Natural Attack (claws, teeth). –2 mutation points.

TRANSMISSIONS

By Andy Collins, JD Wiker, and Jeff "Zippy" Quick

Gamemaster Hints

The police have discovered what might be a cult of demon worshipers. (See "Final Church" in Chapter 6: The Illuminati in the DARK•MATTER™ campaign setting for more information.) They've contacted the Hoffmann Institute instead of the FBI, since one of the fingerprints found at the scene is that of an FBI agent.

In fact, the agent was one of several planted in the FBI to assist in covering up cult activities. He was participating in a secret ritual when the demon they summoned got away from them, forcing them all to flee.

Can the heroes track down the FBI agent? Will he talk? And where is the demon now?

DARK•MATTER™

SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT
Precinct 33
Seattle, WA 98102

Crime Scene Report

Case Number: 67-6-6131

Offense: homicide

Victim: Martin Kelso **DOB:** 7/13/80

Victim: Evelyn Gephardt **DOB:** 9/04/81

Location: University R&R, 316 Calderon Road, Billiard room

Time: approximately 0100-0300 hours

Means: apparently ritual torture/mutilation

Weapon(s): apparently curved knife or sickle (not found)

Details:

Reporting officer arrived at University R&R, 316 Calderon Road at 0310 hours, in response to a report of a possible homicide. Witnesses reported seeing several unclothed and bloody men and women exit University R&R and drive away in a gray van.

R/O entered business (temporarily closed by Excise) and discovered bodies of college students. Bodies had been attached to billiard tables with leather straps and ritually tortured and desecrated. Internal organs had been removed and placed in jars. R/O found occult symbols drawn in blood on floor, along with candles and unidentified powder. Cleaning supplies were found nearby, along with thirteen suits of street clothing. No identification was found, except for those belonging to victims.

/// WARNING /// WARNING /// WARNING ///

MANTEBRON SYSTEM NEWS REPORT

A water quarantine is in effect in the Mantebron system, according to an official release from the High Gulch governmental systems. Colonial Governor Giles Sandovar reports in the release that bacteria counts in High Gulch atmosphere condensers have risen 600% in the last two weeks.

Sandovar reassured off-planet family and friends that residents appear healthy and unharmed, but he declared a planet-wide state of emergency. No water is to be introduced to or exported from the ecosystem until further studies are completed. Off-planet visitors are required to recycle their own water and wastes until preliminary studies conclude in ten days.

Gamemaster Hints

If someone wanted to poison a desert planet's water system, that person would poison the atmosphere. Reasons for large-scale poisoning include extortion from hostile business interests, biological warfare released by Externals, or just a natural part of the planet's lifecycle.

Heroes can get involved as part of the cleanup efforts or perhaps as water smugglers. On a desert planet, water is scarce when there isn't a quarantine. Certain individuals might be willing to pay well for uncontaminated water during the government-imposed draught.

STAR DRIVE®

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Twenty-nine-year-old Corey Solomon, director of the upcoming DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® movie, has his work cut out for him: A legion of fans have big expectations when it comes to seeing their favorite roleplaying game on the big screen. Solomon recently took a break from his special effects chores to speak with *DRAGON® Magazine* about monsters, the D&D® movie universe, and working with Doctor Who and Riff-Raff.

THE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS MOVIE

The Wisdom of (Corey) Solomon

By Cory Herndon

Although this is Solomon's first film, he's been working on the project for nearly a decade. In 1991, his fledgling film company acquired the film rights to the D&D game from TSR, Inc.

"I grew up in the film industry in Toronto," Solomon remembers, "[and] figured I'd try my luck in Hollywood. I didn't want to just go out there with a script—I wanted to go out there with a property that could make a Spielberg/Lucas style *Raiders*-type movie."

It's important to Solomon that the movie resonates with players of the D&D game. "Other than dragons, obviously, there's skeletons, orcs, beholders, imps, versions of mind flayers."

The movie is not just for fans of the D&D game, however. "Some terms get defined for the [general] audience … but even in cases where things aren't spelled out, if you play D&D, you're going to recognize it—whether it's a spell, a character, or whatever. We stay true to what type of armor they're allowed to wear and what kind of weapons they're allowed to use. And the violence is real, gritty, D&D violence. [It's] not gory, but when a character gets hit, he gets hit. I'm guessing we'll get a PG-13."

Hard at work on the film's special effects, Solomon cautions against prejudging the movie by its relatively small budget. Thanks to lower production costs in Prague and Canada, he plans to bring in a "$90 million movie for a third of that."

Solomon is proud of the movie's dragons. "There're a lot more dragons than in films like *Dragonslayer*, and [there's] a lot more to them. They won't stay hidden in the dark, for one thing. You'll see a baby gold dragon being born."

Don't expect cute and cuddly reptiles, either. "These aren't nice dragons; they're D&D dragons, red and gold. They're armored, not like the dragon in *Dragonheart*. And they're big. *Really* big."

The movie's 11-minute climax features a virtual army of dragons. "There will be 60–140 dragons on the screen at a time. There's hand-to-hand combat between dragons, dragons attacking mages on the rooftops of the magic school, dragons chasing the Empress …"

The director has prepared a story arc that covers three films. If the first is a hit, this backstory will become clearer in the next two movies. When pressed, however, Solomon remains cagey on the plot.

"I hate summarizing the story. At the moment, my mind's too into playing the story out, not summing it up. Let's just say that all the characters are entwined in a bigger story, and this is just the first chapter."

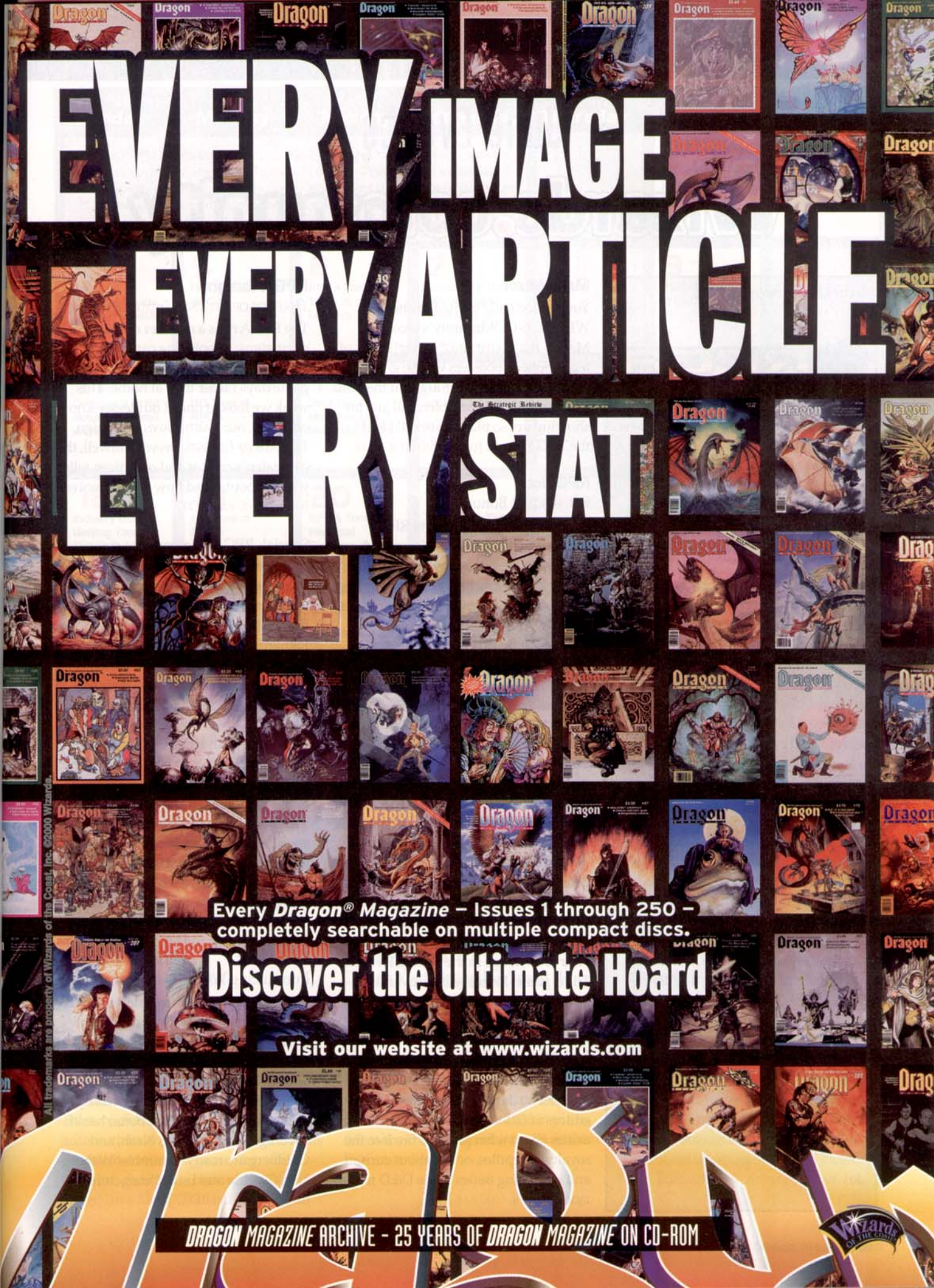
Cory Herndon usually works across the hall from DRAGON Magazine at TOPDECK™ Magazine, where he's in charge of waffles, staples, and Post-It notes.

What, No Meat Loaf?

In addition to OSCAR-winner Jeremy Irons and EMMY-winner Justin Whalin (*Lois & Clark*), *Dungeons & Dragons* features appearances by cult-favorite British actors Tom Baker (*Dr. Who*) and Richard O'Brien (*The Rocky Horror Picture Show*).

Recalling how Baker was cast, Solomon says, "We hadn't cast the role of Hollvarth yet, but we'd always intended to cast an English actor with a lot of credibility. Tom Baker had been called in to read for the part by the casting director in England. Of course when I saw him, I recognized him right away; I'm a *Dr. Who* fan. And I thought, 'he's great … of course, he's probably the biggest elf I've ever seen.' We decided to say he's an elf who's been very jolly and eaten a lot over the years.

"With Richard O'Brien, we wanted somebody really slimy for the leader of the Thieves Guild. We saw his audition tape, which began, "Hello, L.A. I don't come out for many parts—I don't need to. But I read this part, and it's me, and I must have it, and you must cast me." And that was that.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June Events

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Weekly Network Chats

The RPGA® Network has added a new line-up of chats to the RPGA Tonight chat held twice a month. Come find us nightly in the RPGA Forum!

HQ Time at RPGA

Every Monday, you can find RPGA Headquarters staff in the RPGA Forum. Staff will answer questions and shoot the breeze with you (but not engage in in-character chat), so come on by! Mondays, 6:00 P.M. PDT.

Living City Time

Every Wednesday, you'll find a Living City™ board member in the RPGA Forum ready to answer your questions about our most popular Living campaign. This is your chance to verify rumors, ask questions, and give your suggestions to the campaign board. Wednesdays, 6:00 P.M. PDT.

RPGA Members Writer's Workshop

Robert Wiese hosts a writer's workshop in the RPGA Events room (accessed through the RPGA Forum) for veteran and budding roleplaying writers. This session is designed to help people become better adventure designers; this is not a Q&A session. Designed for Guild-level RPGA members, others are welcome to listen, but only Guild-level members can have their scenarios discussed, and only Guild-level members receive scenarios to read before the sessions. Wednesday, twice monthly, 6:00 P.M. PDT.

Magic Mixer

You are cordially invited to attend WIZARDS.COMmunity's second Magic: the Gathering® Mixer! Packs of ten Prophecy boosters will be given out randomly to guests throughout the hour by an invisible Prize Golem, all just for showing up, so plan to attend! Held in the TCG Forum. June 2, 5:00 P.M. PDT.

RPG Hour

Birthright® Bonus!

Previously available only to RPGA members, Carrie Bebris' *Hogunmark Domain Sourcebook* is now online, along with the long-awaited publication of Ed Stark's *Book of Regency*. Ed also presents his GenCon® Game Fair exclusive Birthright Board Game, now online. June 2, 6:00 P.M. PDT.

3rd Edition D&D® Barbarians

Barbarians are another of 3rd Edition D&D's "old classes made new." Designer Monte Cook is back with a look at the concept of barbarian rage and the removal of multiclass and demihuman restrictions. June 16, 6:00 P.M. PDT.

Totally Twisted Trivia

Been playing the D&D game since you were just out of the cradle? Own every supplement TSR ever printed? Well, even if you don't, we invite you to test your knowledge in the Totally Twisted Trivia game. Prizes will be awarded! June 3 and June 17, 8:55 P.M. PDT.

From the Dragon's Mouth

Building a Better Dragon

What makes the D&D game's iconic monster so dangerous? Chat with the editors of *Dungeon®* and *Dragon®* magazines about what puts the fire into the royalty of reptiles, or ask about current and upcoming issues of the D&D magazines. June 4, 6:00 P.M. PDT.

RPGA Tonight

Threads of Legends Introduction

The RPGA runs a number of Living campaigns: roleplaying campaigns where you play at conventions and game days rather than at home. This week we look at one of our lesser-known offerings, our Earthdawn campaign, *Threads of Legend*. Drew Caldwell, the campaign's creator and organizer, tells you all about it and how to get involved. June 6, 6:00 P.M. PDT.

Special: RPGA Regional Directors in Europe

Regional Directors serve around the world, not just in the US and Canada. Branch Managers Ann Van Dam and Ian Richards from Europe explain the roles of these valued members in their branches and how to access their services. June 20, 1:00 P.M. PDT.

What Use Is an RPGA Regional Director to Me?

RPGA has regional representatives, called Regional Directors, who serve members near to their homes. RDs know about local clubs and activities, and work to promote the RPGA. North American Branch Manager Tom Ko tells you what you can get from your RD. June 20, 6:00 P.M. PDT.

TCG Hour

Introducing WCW™ Nitro™

Get into the ring! Wizards debuts WCW Nitro, an all-new TCG where you pit the stars of World Championship Wrestling against each other. Become your favorite WCW wrestlers, perform their devastating moves, and make your opponents wish they had better health coverage. Hogan, Sting, Nash, and Goldberg are ready to rumble! With Tom Goedde and Luke Peterschmidt. June 9, 6:00 P.M. PDT.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
WIZARDS.COMmunity chat site also hosts weekly online help chats for the POKÉMON and MAGIC card games in the TCG Forum, and a number of in-character roleplaying games run by WizOs and site members alike. For the most up-to-date information, visit the calendars located at: **www.wizards.com/chat**				1	2 MAGIC Mixer RPGA Hour: BIRTHRIGHT Bonus!	3 Totally Twisted Trivia
4 From the Dragon's Mouth: Building a Better Dragon	5 HQ Time at RPGA	6 RPGA Tonight: THREADS OF LEGENDS	7 LIVING CITY Time RPGA Writers' Workshop	8	9 TCG Hour: WCW NITRO	10
11 Designer's Guild: Return of GAMMA WORLD	12 HQ Time at RPGA	13 Deck Deconstruction: U.S. Nationals Decks	14 LIVING CITY Time	15	16 RPG Hour: Barbarians	17 Totally Twisted Trivia
18 Industry Edge: Getting Your Fiction Published	19 HQ Time at RPGA	20 RPGA Tonight: Regional Directors, Europe & North America	21 LIVING CITY Time RPGA Writers' Workshop	22	23 TCG Hour: Joe Speaks	24
25 Sage Advice Live!	26 HQ Time at RPGA	27 Wizards Profiles: *Prophecy* Author Vance Moore	28 LIVING CITY Time	29	30	

Joe Speaks

The *Prophecy* expansion has hit the shelves and Joe is ready to field your questions on art, design, or just answer "What were you guys thinking!?" Joe Hauck, brand manager and the official spokesman of MAGIC: THE GATHERING, gives you the scoop on MAGIC's big picture. June 23, 6:00 P.M. PDT.

Designers' Guild

Return of GAMMA WORLD

The landmark post-apocalyptic GAMMA WORLD® game returns in its fifth edition as a stand-alone, this time using the ALTERNITY® rules engine. The Pacific Northwest is overrun with mutants, and PCs must battle for survival on Gamma Terra. Nick Pollotta, GAMMA WORLD author, chats with designer Andy Collins on how the look and gameplay of this oldie but goodie has been updated for today! June 11, 6:00 P.M. PDT.

Deck Deconstruction Seminar

Deconstructing U.S. Nationals Decks

Randy Beuhler takes a look at the players and the decks that made it to the Orlando, Florida U.S. Nationals this year. Choose one of the decks at **www.wizards.com/chat/DeckPoll.asp** to determine the topic for the night. June 13, 5:00 P.M. PDT.

Industry Edge

Getting Your Fiction Published II

By popular request, Managing Editor Peter Archer returns to "Wizards Presents ..." for a reprise of his chat "Tips on Getting Your Fiction Published." Whether your interest is futuristic sci-fi or medieval fantasy, if you've ever dreamed of seeing your name in print, this is the chat to attend. June 18, 6:00 P.M. PDT.

Sage Advice Live!

Ask Your D&D Questions!

Think you can stump the Sage, Skip Williams, with your questions about the D&D, ALTERNITY, and MARVEL SUPER HEROES® roleplaying games? It's tougher than you think! Now you don't have to wait for the next issue of *DRAGON Magazine* to hear the Sage's words of gaming wisdom. June 25, 6:00 P.M. PDT.

Wizards Profiles

Prophecy: Masquerades Novel

Attack! The Kelds lay siege to Jamurra in this latest installment of the MAGIC novels. Teferi comes to the aid of the Jamurran city-states, but even planeswalkers cannot fight a nation. Author Vance Moore joins us to discuss *Prophecy: Masquerades*. June 27, 6:00 P.M. PDT

Dungeoncraft

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By Ray Winninger

Those of you who have followed this column over the past year and a half are now ready to roll the dice. All preparations are complete, and it's time to start playing. Before you can expect your diplomas, though, there's the small matter of the final exam. You won't know for certain whether you have what it takes to DM unless and until you make your way through the first game session. I'm saving the pointers on how to run a session for next month. Before we consider them, it's worth taking some time to survey the various tools that are necessary to play the AD&D® game. Having an ideal collection of books, dice and supplies on hand is one of the most effective steps you can take to ensure a smooth game session.

The notes that follow are my personal opinions. Of course, everything that appears in "Dungeoncraft" is my opinion, but in this case it's worth noting. The true masters of Dungeoncraft are more likely to disagree on this subject than any other. Every DM plays differently, and what is an absolutely essential tool to some is an unseemly distraction to others. So as usual, treat my ramblings as food for thought; use the advice you like and ignore the advice you don't like. If you've never DMed before and don't have an opinion of your own, try it my way, discover what works and doesn't work for you, and then write me a letter later to tell me why I was wrong.

There's one other point worth mentioning before I get started. If you plan to do some serious Dungeon Mastering, a trip to your local office superstore is in order. These outlets (such as Office Max, Office Depot, or Staples) carry an indescribable array of papers, organizers, and gadgets that you're likely to find useful. My own tactic is to browse my local superstore from end to end and allow inspiration to strike. Over the years, I've unearthed an incredible collection of special graph papers, whiteboards, cork boards, and drawing templates that I've found invaluable.

With that out of the way, here are my thoughts on the specific tools you might have on hand before sitting down to a game of AD&D.

1 DM's Screen

A DM's screen of some sort is an absolute necessity. Although I recommend the official "store bought" screen, it's easy enough to improvise your own if you'd rather spend your gaming dollars elsewhere. The main purpose of the DM's Screen, of course, is to give you some place to set your various notes and maps without exposing them to the players. Trying to run a session without a DM's Screen is likely to force you into some uncomfortable contortions and slow play—you won't be able to keep your materials spread out for easy access, and you'll find yourself constantly shuffling through papers. In fact, if you have the space on your gaming table, I recommend setting up two adjoining screens for even more secret space. This configuration lets you simultaneously lay out all your materials and keep a rulebook open to an important page, while still leaving plenty of dice-rolling space.

As you get more and more sessions under your belt, you should strive to evolve your DM's Screen to make it as useful as possible. Do you have a consistent problem recalling a certain rule? Scribble a note to yourself and paperclip it to the inside of your screen. Is your next adventure likely to place the players in situations requiring special rules or charts (such as underwater combat or extraplanar spell casting)? Photocopy the appropriate materials and clip them to the inside of your screen. Similarly, when I'm running a store-bought or prepared adventure, I almost always photocopy short sections of the text and clip them to my screen for reference. If I were running "The Scar" (my adventure from *Dungeon® Adventures* #80), for example, I'd copy the random encounter charts and the sections about sneaking around the complex.

Catch up on past installments of Dungeoncraft.
http://www.wizards.com/dragon/Welcome.asp

Somewhat related to the DM's Screen is the notion of a Player's Screen. Some players like to set up their own secret areas, and TSR even produced an official line of Player's Screens a few years ago. Under all but the most extraordinary circumstances, I ban these distractions from the table. Not only do they take up too much space, but I find that most groups find one or more players maintaining obvious piles of secret notes distracting. Most players with such an interest are really just frustrated DMs anyway and would be much better off running their own campaigns.

2 Adventure Notes

Some set of papers describing the adventure you are running is another obvious necessity. Unless you are one of the best eight or ten DMs ever to grace the gaming tables, don't even think about running a game without a prepared description of the adventure you are undertaking. A lack of preparation vastly increases the odds that the whole session will collapse into boredom. Sure, you can't possibly cover every contingency in your notes, but a good starting point and a foundation are necessities.

Adventure notes break down into two obvious categories: those you purchase and those you create yourself. The former category is pretty straightforward—you're planning to use whatever the designers give you. (Most store-bought adventures are quite well organized.) When using a store-bought adventure, I always take the time to photocopy any important charts or maps that appear in the text. That way, I can refer to these important materials while keeping the main booklet open to the section describing the players' current activities.

Notes you prepare yourself are another matter altogether. Everyone has his own favorite format, but I prefer to scrawl my notes on carefully numbered loose-leaf paper and keep them in three ring binders. This method allows me to separate the pages so I can refer to several of them simultaneously when necessary. In fact, I've grown so fond of this system that I'll sometimes photocopy smaller store-bought adventures onto individual sheets so I can use them in the same way.

3 Rulebooks

You can't really play the AD&D game without a copy of the rulebooks on hand for reference. One of your goals as DM is to minimize the rules look-ups during play, but a certain amount of page turning is just unavoidable. Always make sure you have your own copies of the *Player's Handbook* and *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* on hand, as well as the complete descriptions for any monsters that might turn up during the evening's adventuring—not to mention any subsidiary rulebooks you're using (such as the various Complete Handbooks). If one or more monsters are likely to turn up in the current adventure, try copying their vital stats onto 3×5 index cards before play begins. That way, you can quickly pull out the cards during play and won't need to flip through various rulebooks and magazines.

I use a couple of other special regulations regarding rulebooks. First, I don't allow the players to refer to anything but the *Player's Handbook* (and the appropriate Complete Handbook) during play. This prevents the players from consulting monster statistics during a battle or referring to the lists of standard magical items when trying to make guesses about newly acquired items. In fact, I strongly discourage the players from bringing copies of the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide* or other banned books to the session to save space at the gaming table.

Further, I require players with spellcaster characters to keep the appropriate spell descriptions handy during play. If I have a question about a particular spell cast by a player, I expect that player to have the answer on hand. (What's the range on that *sleep* spell? What's the duration of *invisibility 10' radius*?) This prevents me from spending a lot of time flipping through the rules myself, and it usually gives me an opportunity to keep play moving by conducting some other action while the player seeks the answer.

4 Character Sheets

While a blank piece of paper can certainly serve as an effective character sheet, I prefer to provide more formal sheets and mandate their use. I go so far as to require the players to fill out the entire sheet before play. That way, I can guarantee that the players are fully prepared and have pre-calculated their THAC0s, saving throws, and various other details. Stopping for a player to look up these numbers during the game is only going to consume valuable time and cut into everybody's fun.

Of course, it's possible to take this philosophy too far. Some of the character sheets I've seen (like those for the 1st edition produced about fifteen years ago) practically require the players to write entire books about their characters. The key is to find a sheet that requires a minimum of fuss but still includes all the important details. The official sheets now sold by Wizards of the Coast are quite good. You can also find some decent character sheets floating around various Internet sites, or you can sit down and draw up your own. I recommend this last course only if you expect your campaign to have some unusual needs. As DM, you already have plenty of work to do—if you can't find anything else, investing a few bucks in the official sheets is almost always worth it.

5 Dice

Dice are an obvious requirement for playing the AD&D game, though there are a couple of points that are worth mentioning. Don't buy cheap dice made of soft plastic—the high impact polyhedrons aren't much more expensive and one decent set will last you forever. The softies tend to wear out after a few months. Also, make sure you and your players have enough dice for everybody. Generally, at a minimum this means a full set for the DM, a full set for the players as a whole, and a separate d20 for each individual player. Sharing a single d20 among all the players tends to waste a lot of time and slow down combat. It's also a good idea to ask the players to keep the dice they are using close to themselves and away from the center of the game table. Allowing the dice to clutter up the middle of the table not only makes it easy for players to lose dice they personally own, but it can make specific dice difficult to find when needed.

While it's important to make sure you have enough dice on hand, it's also important not to clutter up the playing area with unneeded dice. For some reason, there are some DMs who like to

travel around with huge bags full of the things. I've never understood this impulse. As DM, you already have enough things to carry, and a huge mess of dice is just going to get in your way.

6 Miniatures

Miniatures constitute one of the great controversies among DMs. Some wouldn't think of playing without them; others find them distracting and limiting. Personally, I think they add a great deal to play, and I encourage you to use them every chance you get. That said, there are some obvious drawbacks that prevent many DMs from adopting them.

If you've ever been in a game store, I don't need to tell you that miniatures are expensive. A good starting set can easily run a couple hundred dollars or more. Even after you shell out the cash, you have to find the time to paint the things. The last seventeen columns have probably already clued you into the fact that, as DM, you already have an awful lot of work to do.

Of course, buying and painting miniatures is an enjoyable end unto itself. There's a real satisfaction in capturing just the right expression on that goblin's face or correctly painting chain mail for the first time. Plus, a good collection of painted miniatures is a nice trophy you can use to decorate your game room.

If you're thinking about using miniatures in your games but have yet to make up your mind, here's a recommendation. Never buy more than one or two figures at a time, and buy new figures only when you've finished painting the last ones. That way, if you discover that you don't really have the time or the patience to invest in a collection, you'll minimize your investment and won't end up with an enormous pile of unpainted lead.

7 Battle Maps

Some DMs like to run their combats entirely in the imaginations of the players, taking time each round to describe the relative positions of the various combatants and the surrounding scenery. I prefer to use tokens, markers, or miniatures as a visual aid to depict the action. I find that such a scheme not only saves me time but also encourages the players to be a bit more creative when describing their actions. Showing a player a battle map roughly depicting the scenery inside the dungeon is a great way to encourage him to try an interesting maneuver like yanking a tapestry off a wall down onto the head of his opponent. Another benefit of using a battle map is that you'll find it much easier to adjudicate the range and effect areas of spells, breath weapons, and so forth.

If you're on a tight budget, a pad of paper and a pencil can serve as an effective map. Whenever you start a combat, sketch out a little map of the battleground and place each character's initials on the map to indicate his or her position. As the combatants move, just erase and redraw the initials.

If you've got a little money to spend, an even better method is to purchase a small whiteboard (say 2 feet by 3 feet) and a set of dry erase markers from your neighborhood office supply store. Place the whiteboard in the middle of the gaming table and quickly sketch out the surroundings whenever a combat begins. You can use improvised tokens or miniature figures directly on the board to represent the various combatants or draw in initials as I recommended above.

8 Notepads

I always make sure to have two small notepads on hand when running a session. I keep one and place the other outside of my DM screen in front of the players. The purpose of the notepads is to allow specific players and myself to exchange secret communications. Suppose, for instance, that the players are exploring a forest, they've sent their thief up ahead as a scout, and he's just stumbled across something interesting. For now, I might simply pass that player a note describing what he sees instead of blurting out the description to the whole party. After all, if the thief just discovered something dangerous, the rest of the party shouldn't know anything about it unless the thief is close enough to shout a warning. Similarly, if the thief just discovered some treasure, he might want to help himself to some of the choice pieces before he reveals the rest of the treasure to his friends.

9 Props

I'm a big fan of using relevant props during play, particularly little handouts approximating scrolls, notes and other important clues uncovered by the players. I think that props give the DM an excellent method of subtly communicating important information to the players and therefore lead to much more interesting puzzles (for a more complete discussion of puzzles, see issue #271). Suppose, for instance, that the players are searching a duke's private papers and they find a note the duke received from his lord ordering him to launch a treacherous attack on a nearby town. The fact that a couple of specific words in the letter are misspelled might be a clue meant to convince the players that the note was a forgery. Perhaps the players have already seen another note undeniably written by the king's mischievous brother in which those same two words were misspelled. How can you pass the players these clues without providing them with facsimiles of the notes in question? After all, simply announcing that "You find a note in which two words are misspelled" immediately calls attention to the ruse and spoils the whole thing. This is a great example of the sort of puzzle you should strive to create, and you should try to use such props and facsimiles whenever you can.

On the other hand, I'm not a big fan of using props that don't really advance the adventure or provide the players with important information. I've known DMs and players who like to bring toy daggers, cheap jewelry, or even entire costumes to game sessions to help them "get into character." Personally, I find those sorts of things a little spooky, but if you find that they add to your fun, more power to you.

That wraps up another installment. Next month, as promised, I'll provide some tips for running your first session.

Ray Winninger is a game designer and long-time contributor to DRAGON® Magazine. *He lives in Chicago, San Francisco and Seattle.*

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By Skip Williams

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The Sage cannot make personal replies;
please include no SASE with your questions.

This month the Sage considers an assortment of questions from the AD&D® game, all straight from the mailbag, and takes a side trip to the universe of the ALTERNITY® game.

Do the undead character classes in the *Requiem: The Grim Harvest* boxed set get the base Armor Classes listed for similar creatures in the Monstrous Manual™ tome or something else? I can't find a base Armor Class listed anywhere.

The undead PCs from the *Requiem* set are Armor Class 10 unless they wear armor—just like other characters.

Can a really big weapon negate the automatic miss from a *cloak of displacement*?

One of the player characters in my group has a *naga crown* (from the *Undermountain* boxed set), which doubles the wearer's spellcasting ability. The character also has two *rings of wizardry*: one that doubles 1st- through 3rd-level spells, and one that doubles 4th- and 5th-level spells. The character gained all of these items in another DM's campaign. Anyway, the player says the items work together to give the character four times as many spells of 1st through 5th level as normally allowed. Is this for real? Do these items work like that? Is there some potentially fatal item interaction?

As "Sage Advice" has pointed out many times before, items that produce similar effects generally do not work together. The character can claim double spells from the *crown* or double spells from the *rings*, but not both. Since a character can wear only two magical rings, the character in question would do well to ditch the *rings of wizardry*. Note that if you run a really high-powered campaign, it would be okay if the character got triple spells, one extra "set" from the *rings* and one from the *crown*, but that doesn't sound like it will suit your game.

Of course, there's no particular reason why you should allow the character to keep any of these items (or even allow the character into your game at all). While it's fairly common for DMs to allow players to import favorite characters from other campaigns, those characters always enter strictly at the DM's sufferance. The DM should always review such characters to make sure that their levels of power fit the campaign. Stripping away overpowered magic is a time-honored—and absolutely necessary—tradition when dealing with imported characters.

The statistics for the *mantle of Baravar* spell (from the *Priest's Spell Compendium*, Volume Two) say that the spell's duration is 1 turn plus 1 round per level of the caster. The spell description, however, says a 10th-level priest can protect one creature with the mantle for 10 hours. What is the actual duration of a *mantle of Baravar* spell?

One hour per caster level; the caster can divide the duration equally among two or more recipients, but each recipient must receive at least 30 minutes' worth of protection.

The rules for blocking on page 42 of the *Combat & Tactics* book say a character making a block makes a normal attack roll against Armor Class 4. My DM has interpreted that to mean that you roll using only your base THAC0, but in the example the character uses an "adjusted THAC0." Which is correct?

In this case, the term "normal attack roll" means apply all modifiers the character would get when making a normal melee attack (Strength, specialization, weapon mastery, magical weapon bonus, and the like). Making an attack roll using only the character's base THAC0 is hardly "normal."

The description of the Axe of the Dwarvish Lords artifact in the *Axe of the Dwarvish Lords* adventure says the Axe slowly transforms its user into the generic dwarf from the *Player's Handbook*. That's only if the user isn't already some kind of dwarf,

right? If a deep dwarf uses the Axe, does he turn into a mountain dwarf?

The Axe transforms the owner into a "standard" dwarf, or hill dwarf (not a mountain dwarf), even if that character is already some other kind of dwarf.

When using the Death's Door rule, in which a character doesn't die until her hit points reach –10, how does a *ring of regeneration* work? The *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* says the *ring* can bring a person back to life if she died when wearing it, but how does this work if the rate of regeneration is 1 hit point per turn and you're losing 1 hit point per round when your hit points are below zero?

The character doesn't die while wearing the *ring* unless she was "killed" by a death effect, fire, acid, or disintegration. The character's hit points keep right on falling at the rate of 1 point a round even after the character's total reaches –10. Eventually, the *ring* restores 1 hit point. At that time, the character stops losing hit points. Thereafter, the character regains hit points from the *ring* until she reaches full hit points. For example, if a character is knocked down to –3 hit points, it will be 10 minutes (10 rounds) until the character regains a hit point from her *ring of regeneration*. During that time, the character's hit point total falls to –13, but she's still alive thanks to the *ring* and will lose no more hit points simply from having a negative hit point total. After 14 more turns, the character will have 1 hit point and will be conscious again.

ALTERNITY ANSWERS

I'm trying to create a piece of special equipment for a new character. The character is an ex-professional athlete. I want to give the character an anti-gravity harness that can be switched on or off for hopping around a ball field or court. It provides no directional control but simply negates the effects of gravity. How much would this device cost? What sort of abilities might this give the hero?

The obvious match here is the jetpack (**Table P42: Vehicles** and page 196 in the *Player's Handbook*). Your item allows for no directional control at all and doesn't provide any speed; it really just makes the wearer weightless, so it might cost 1,000 to 2,500K with the same durability. The speed entries (Acc, Cruise, and Max) will be 0.

On the other hand, you could treat the item just like the Weight Neutralizer in the *Arms & Equipment Guide* (600K, maybe a tad more).

As for abilities, I'd recommend that you simply apply the effects of G1 gravity when the character employs the device. (See page 62 and Table G18 in the *Gamemaster's Guide*.)

Is there a rule for repairing cyberware? It seems logical that either a repair skill or one of the medical skills would be used, but this seems a little too simplistic. What do you suggest?

In most cases, a character's cyber gear escapes damage so long as the character survives. Characters with a lot of cyber gear risk damage to their cyberware if they suffer too much damage; see page 242 of the *Player's Handbook* for details. In any case, damage to installed cyber gear must be repaired by a cybersurgeon using the same procedure as any other type of surgery. Note that mortal damage can sometimes destroy cyber gear outright so that it has to be replaced, not merely repaired, as noted on page 242.

What benefits to you get from a computer gauntlet (as opposed to a professional gauntlet)? How much memory does a professional gauntlet or medical gauntlet have for additional programs?

A computer gauntlet provides a –1 step bonus to all Computer Science–*hacking* and Computer Science–*programming* skill checks and to Knowledge–*computer operation* skill checks.

A professional gauntlet or medical gauntlet probably has at least a Good processor (seven slots of active memory); however, all this memory is taken up by the unit's dedicated programming and is not available to run other programs. Someone could *jury rig* or reprogram the unit to free up the slots, but the unit would lose its original functions.

Can a really big weapon negate the automatic miss from a *cloak of displacement*? For example, will a giant swinging a tree trunk really automatically miss the *cloak*-wearer just because he seems to be 2 or 3 feet away from his actual position? A *true seeing* effect will nullify the automatic miss, right? What about immunity to illusions?

A *cloak of displacement* defeats the first missile or melee attack against the wearer, even melee attacks made with tree trunks. Yes, *true seeing* foils displacement. I suggest you treat the *cloak's* effect as a 3rd-level illusion, so creatures with Intelligence scores of 21 or higher ignore the effect, as do creatures that are immune to all illusion effects.

Alert readers will note that the *Spells & Magic* book contains the 2nd-level spell *displace self*. That spell level is a little low for the *cloak's* effect, so I'm recommending 3rd level instead.

I am having a little trouble with the rules concerning bows and Strength bonus. I remember hearing a ruling somewhere that a character only gained Strength bonuses with a composite bow. Yet the only rules I can find in the *Player's Handbook* are those saying that a character only receives her Strength bonus on a bow she has specially constructed. Does this bow have to be a composite bow, or can it be any bow? Can it be a crossbow?

Bonuses or penalties from Strength do not apply to crossbows; note that a crossbow is not a "bow" for the purposes of this discussion.

Penalties from low Strength apply to bows. Characters with Strength scores of 16 to 18 can use any bow and get their Strength bonuses. For Strength scores of 18/01 or higher, a special bow is required. The rules in the *Player's Handbook* do not require a composite bow to use the higher Strength bonus, but there is a clarification in the *Arms & Equipment Guide* that does require a composite bow.

However, the rules in the *Arms & Equipment Guide* seem to overlook the rule that says you don't need a special bow to get bonuses for a non-exceptional Strength score. I recommend that you require a composite bow for Strengths of 18/01 or higher. Use the damage bonus as a multiplier for the price. For example, a Strength score of 18/01 allows a damage bonus of +3, so a composite bow for a character that strong would cost triple the normal price. Note that characters with lower Strength scores could still use the bow, but they would not be able to string the bow, and they would have to apply whatever Strength adjustments they would normally be allowed, not what the bow allows.

Which spells, if any, would protect you from the steam breath of a dragon turtle?

Is using a *ring of vampiric regeneration* an evil act? Can a paladin use the *ring*?

Wearing or using a *ring of vampiric regeneration* is not an evil act, and a paladin can use the *ring*. In spite of the *ring's* name, it neither provides a regeneration power nor drains hit points from anything—it merely heals the wearer under the right conditions, as explained in the *ring's* description.

I have been having some difficulty understanding how the *antipathy/sympathy* spell works. First, the wizard decides to affect a specific creature type or "characters" of a particular alignment. Let us assume that the caster selects chaotic evil. Would that casting of the spell affect a tanar'ri? Would a red dragon be affected? Next, the spell description speaks of vibrations that emanate from the target object or area. How far from the object or area do these vibrations extend? The only figure I can find in the spell description is the 30-yard range, which I take to mean that the spell could be cast on a target up to 30 yards away from the caster; this implies nothing about the range of the vibrations. So, how close would a creature have to be from the target area or object before being attracted to or repelled from the target area or object?

In this case, "character" is synonymous with "creature," so the *antipathy/sympathy* spell in your example would affect any creature with a chaotic evil alignment.

If the spell is cast on an area, creatures must be within the area before they feel the spell's effects. If the spell is cast on an object, creatures must be close enough to touch the object.

A *wall of fire* spell inflicts 4d4 points of damage plus 1 point per caster level to creatures touching or passing through the wall, 2d4 points of damage to creatures within 10 feet of the *wall*, and 1d4 points of damage to creatures within 20 feet of the wall. If you cast the spell around a white dragon's leg, wouldn't the dragon suffer the damage from the *wall* and the damage from being 10 and 20 feet away because the dragon is simultaneously touching the wall and is also 10 and 20 feet away, thanks to its long body?

No. Targets suffer damage from touching (or passing through) the wall or for being near it, not both. This also applies to any creature that approaches and passes through the *wall* in the course of a single round; it takes damage equal to its most severe exposure—4d4 points of damage plus 1 point of damage per caster level. Note that the dragon in your example would suffer double damage from the wall because it is a cold creature. Note also that the dragon gets a saving throw to avoid touching the wall if the caster tries to place the wall right on it.

I am having a problem with the natural Armor Class of the bariaur. In the *Planescape® Monstrous Compendium® Appendix* the Armor Class for the race is listed as 6; however, none of the information on bariaur player characters mentions any natural armor for the bariaur.

An unarmored bariaur has an Armor Class of 10 (subject to Dexterity adjustments).

According to the text of the 2nd-level wizard spell *rope trick*, the extradimensional space the spell creates can hold the caster and seven others. Does this mean that the caster must climb the rope and occupy the space? Couldn't eight other people go up the rope and enter the space, leaving the caster behind?

No, the caster is not obliged to climb the rope and enter the extradimensional space. I'm inclined to suggest that the caster and up to seven other creatures of any size can occupy the space. If the caster doesn't enter the space, it still holds only seven creatures other than the caster. But then, I've a notoriously literal mind when it comes to reading spell descriptions. It would be perfectly reasonable for a DM to rule that the space can hold any eight creatures of human size. Pick one of these two alternatives and stick to it.

Which spells, if any, would protect you from the steam breath of a dragon turtle? Would spells such as *protection from fire*, *endure heat*, or *fire shield* (cold flames) be effective?

For game purposes, dragon turtle breath is a fire attack. All the spells you have listed offer some degree of protection. Creatures that are immune to fire, such as fire elementals and red dragons, suffer no damage from dragon turtle breath.

Under the spell point system presented in the *Spells & Magic* book, spellcasters can spend extra spell points on free magicks (spells that don't have to be memorized ahead of time). If my wizard spends the points for a 3rd-level free magick, does he still have to study his spellbook? If so, does he have to study every 3rd-level spell in his book? How long would that take?

A wizard must have a spell in his spellbook to use it as a free magick, and the character must study his spellbook to prepare free magicks. The character need not study every spell of the appropriate level, but he does have to at least skim the book. Preparing a free magick takes as much time as preparing a fixed magick, 10 minutes per spell level, though the cost in spell points is higher.

One character in my group has some *dust of sneezing and choking*. The druid in the group wants to use a *dust devil* spell to disperse the *dust* and thus kill several opponents at once. What would happen if someone actually tried that? Could the *dust devil* scoop up the deadly *dust* and use it to kill or incapacitate anyone it touched?

The *dust* has no effect at all if dispersed by a wind (though I imagine it would create a pretty unpleasant smell).

In *Dragon Magazine* #269 there was a question asked about how to pronounce the name of the gnoll's cousin, the flind. You responded that everyone you know pronounces it so that it rhymes with "wind." I thought that was a good answer, until I thought for just a second more and realized that answer still didn't solve the questioner's problem. Is that "wind" as in "the wind is blowing from the south," or "I need to wind my watch?" Long "i" or short "i"? The poor guy still has no idea how to pronounce "flind."

Yes, well I was being flippant there. Sometimes the Sage's jokes work, and sometimes they crash and burn.

The really correct way to pronounce "flind" is "gnoll" (rhymes with roll or role). Too many designers insist on creating new monsters when variants on existing monsters will do.

For the record, the name "flind" rhymes with wind (air movement outdoors) and grinned (a smile in the past tense).

Skip Williams has been serving as the lead designer of the new Monster Manual, *a task that has given him plenty of opportunities to ponder the ups and downs of monster design.*

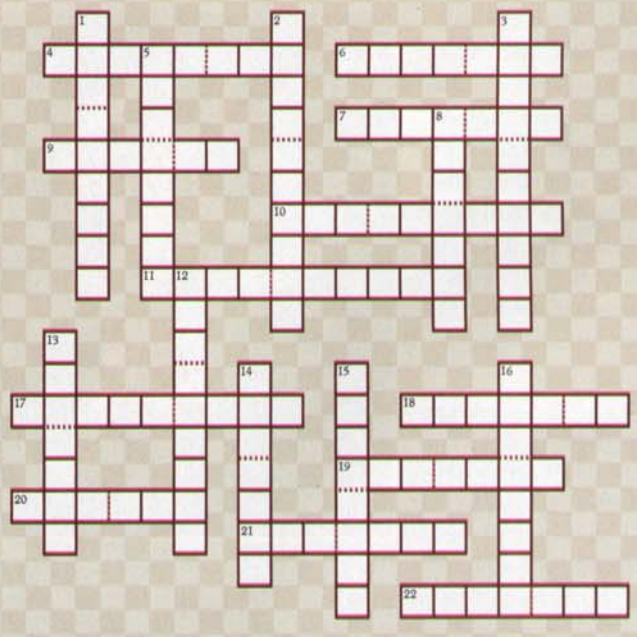
MIND FLAYERS

no. 13

by Mike Selinker

This crossword consists only of TSR and Wizards of the Coast products that share a common feature: Their titles can each be divided into two words that have nothing to do with the titles. The clues give you both halves and then a clue to the answer. Dotted lines separate the halves of the titles. You'll need a strong knowledge of TSR and WotC history to get all of these!

1 Steal from + By spoken word = Servodrone racing game
2 Scheme + Abscond = Dimensional AD&D® setting
3 Fools + Stealing = Double Diamond novelette
4 Lincoln assassin + Sick = Wild West game
5 Light brown + Fellows = Wierd ALTERNITY setting
6 Kind of beetle + Very long time = TSR magazine
7 Non-salaried employee + '70s philosophy = MAGIC® expansion
8 Little dog + Dogs and cats = Manipulative GREYHAWK® module
9 Haul + Atop = Sister publication of #6
10 Cooldge, for short + Bring in = Realms citybook
11 Backstroked, e.g. + Bad situation = Spooky AD&D module
12 Actor Wheaton + Investigates = DRAGONLANCE® sourcebook
13 Cheer + Eastern continent = Early RPGA® D&D module
14 Appendage + Conclusions = DRAGONLANCE book trilogy
15 Salamander + Innkeeper orders = DRAGONLANCE module
16 Alternative to CD + Cognizant = ALTERNITY cyber-guide
17 Not those + One who just gets by = DARK SUN® novel
18 Diamond weight + Ancient city = ORIENTAL ADVENTURES book
19 Sunbathe + Musical syllables = Another Realms citybook
20 Russian spacecraft + Mature = Another MAGIC expansion
21 Requiring payment + Roster = former Trading card magazine
22 Stab with a finger + "___ Dieu!" = Wildly popular TCG



Role Models

At the Movies

By Chris Pramas

Photos by Craig Cudnohufsky
Miniatures painted by Jason Soles
Dioramas by Kim Graham

Miniatures use in roleplaying games is often a haphazard affair. In the midst of a game, there's no time to find just the right figure or piece of scenery. Destroying the pace of a session to make it look right just isn't worth it, so DMs find themselves substituting orcs for dwarfs, using books for hills, and standing flying wizards on dice. While these solutions are practical enough, they lack the visual impact of a well-rendered scene. The "grab anything" approach will get you through run-of-the-mill encounters, but sometimes you want to stage something special. When you've got a big climax coming up, or a scene with great visceral appeal, you can set the scene with a little help from the movies.

Yes, it might sound a little wacky, but consider that the DM already has many things in common with a movie director. A DM controls the story, the pace, and even the extras. If you think like a director when preparing a scene, you can use miniatures and terrain to really bring an encounter to life.

Location

The first thing you should do is scout your location. You need to find a place that will look good, but isn't too complicated to replicate on the tabletop. You can find some great pre-made terrain, especially at big conventions like the GEN CON® Game Fair. If you lack access or funds for such an investment, you can also make it yourself. You'd be surprised what you can do with an X-acto knife, some styrofoam, and craft store paints. (I'll be giving some tips on making scenery in an upcoming column.) If you use wet-erase table mats, you should at least draw the location before the game. That way you can unroll it at the right time, without stopping to draw the scene.

The photos in this article show an admittedly upscale example of what you can do if you have the time. The scene I set takes place outside of a hill giant stronghold. The PCs need to break inside, and two hill giants guard the enormous doors. This diorama was made by our own Kim Graham, who also sculpts the big dragons and other cool life-sized monsters seen in the Wizards retail stores.

Cast

The player characters you know, and hopefully you already have some good miniatures for the party. Your next step is to ready the opposition. For an encounter like this, you really want to have appropriate figures. If you are using a published adventure, don't be afraid to swap out monsters you don't have for those you do. It's great when you can tell your players, "This is exactly what you see."

For my scene, I've already chosen the two hill giants (primarily because that was the only giant figure we had two of painted). The PCs might think this encounter is a straight forward assault, so I've prepared two surprises: a cyclopskin and a young red dragon.

Greens No Longer

Last issue we showed you some of the "greens" for the *Diablo II* miniatures. Since then the figures have been molded and test cast, and samples have been painted by Jason Soles. You can see some of them in the surrounding pictures. The Barbarian, the Amazon, and the Paladin are in the thick of the melee with the giants and dragon. Here you can see two of the baddies, the Butcher and the Goat Demon. As you can see, the Butcher really shines with a nice, gory paint job.

Choreography

A large part of DMing is handling situations on the fly, especially combat. You never really know what your players are going to do, so many DMs find themselves constantly reacting to the PCs' actions. With your director's hat on, you should give some thought to the choreography of the fight. Try to plan out how the monsters will act during the fight and what contingency plans they have.

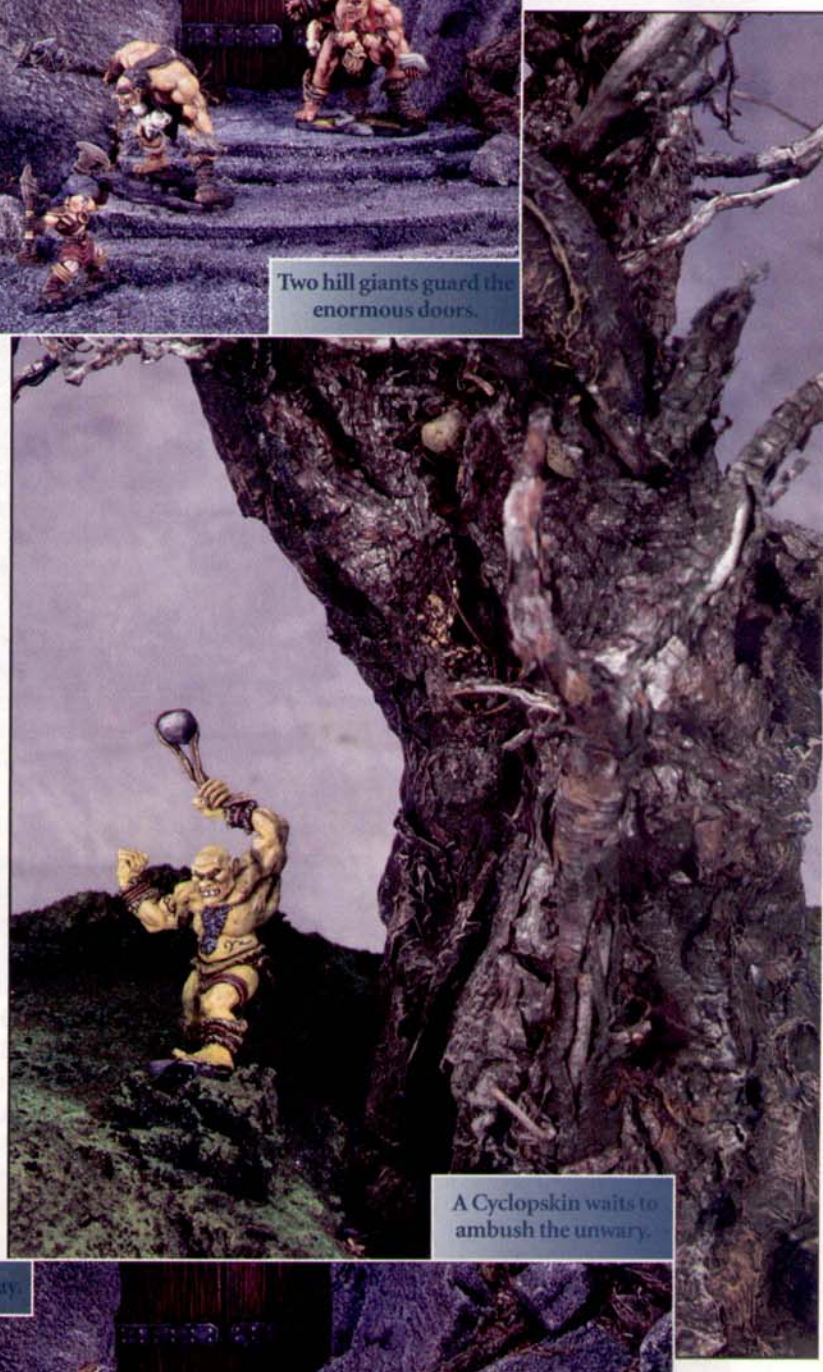
For the hill giants, the choice is obvious. They are there to guard, so they'll stand firm and attack all comers. The giants, however, are not dumb. They have positioned a cyclopskin with a sling behind the tree. They also have an allied dragon behind the hill. Before the encounter begins, I decide that the cyclopskin will appear the round after the PCs attack, and the dragon 3 rounds later.

Remember that the players are your audience and that they'll appreciate surprises. If you have the miniatures you are going to use out on the table when the game begins, your players will quickly clue in to what's going on. It's better to keep all the figs you'll need in a shoebox or miniature's case, so you can pull out the appropriate figure at just the right time. When the red dragon shows up, you'll hear the audience groan!

Two hill giants guard the enormous doors.

FX

If you want the full movie experience, consider adding some FX to your scene. Many gamers use music to the set the mood (the *Conan the Barbarian* soundtrack is a perennial favorite, for instance), and having a good CD cued up can add to your atmosphere. You can also pull off some fun lighting effects with nothing more than a flashlight and a dimmer switch. Actual special FX are, of course, more difficult, but you can add little flourishes like using cotton balls for the walls of fog. These steps are really icing, but they can bring it all together if done well.



A Cyclopskin waits to ambush the unwary.

That's a Wrap

Sadly, there's no editing in an RPG (although on the upside, your scenes never end up on the cutting room floor). All you can do is prepare for the scene and hope the players do their part. With the right miniatures, the right set, and a few little extras, you can make your game like the movies, if only for one night.

A red dragon joins the fray.

Chris Pramas is an avid fan of movies, especially Hong Kong action flicks, which explains the dents and scratches on his miniatures.

Ideas from The Iron Plague

By Johnny L. Wilson

Let technomages, technology, and *Total Annihilation* inspire or rejuvenate your D&D® campaign!

The mixture of technology and magic can either be a heady concoction or a bland mixture of confusing, disparate elements. Some of us like the mixture; others hate it. *Total Annihilation: Kingdoms: The Iron Plague* (*TAKIP*) walks the tightrope. As a real-time strategy game, *TAKIP* offers a new campaign in which the magical world of Darien has been upset by an invasion from a distant land known as Creon. However, Creon is not a mana-based society like those in the original *TAK*. Instead, Creon is the civilization built by Garacaius, father of the Four Monarchs who battled between themselves in the first *Total Annihilation: Kingdoms* game, after he freed himself from the insidious attraction of magic.

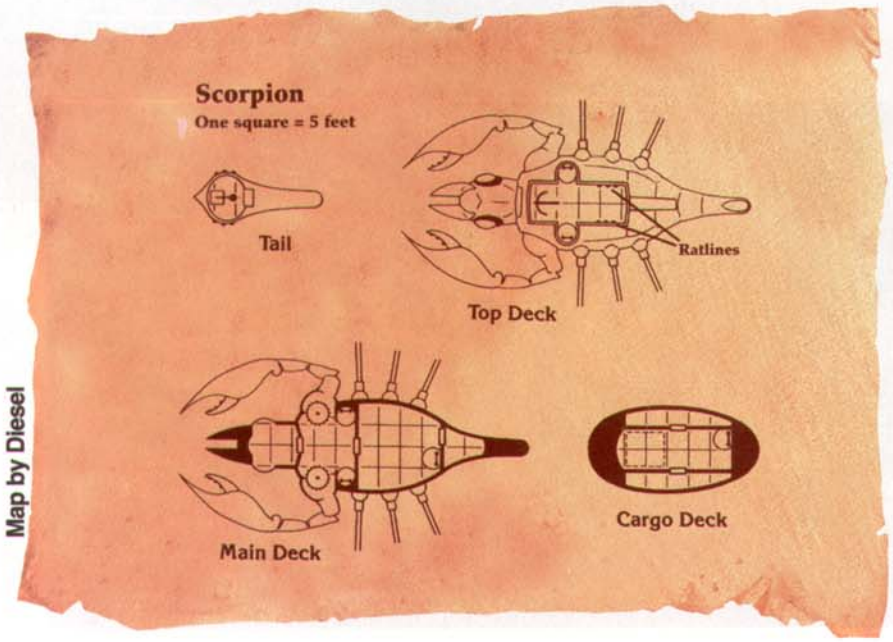
As in the original *TAK*, players who participate in the *TAKIP* campaign are shuffled back and forth between factions. In *TAKIP*, you'll command the forces of Creon introducing the new technologies in one scenario and playing the forces of magical enhancement in others, particularly those of the victorious Aramon and Varunna. This means that you'll be able to dispense incredible destruction to numerous foes in the former and use your arcane skill, innate cleverness, and numerical advantage in the latter.

Leonardo da Vinci: Dungeon Master

For Dungeon Masters, the set-up and ideas inherent in *TAKIP* offer some intriguing ideas for new campaigns or enlivening those that might have started to falter. Just take the basic background built by the designers, and you'll see some of the possibilities. Imagine a dragon-shaped automaton with wires, pulleys, and hinges, or a magically powered robotic construct similar to the AD&D® game's clockwork swordsman.

TAKIP's designers add a touch of Leonardo da Vinci in the midst of their magical universe, providing both a new look and new powers that would liven up the game. Isn't that something a good DM should do, as well? Adventuring parties are prone to assume that such a discovery is "magical" by nature. It's refreshing to throw mysterious contraptions at a party to give them something new. For example, in his D&D campaign, Chris Perkins of *DUNGEON® Adventures* fame throws the PCs against machines inspired by SPELLJAMMER® vessels. These terrestrial juggernauts, such as the "walking scorpion" pictured below, represent a twisted technology that combines primitive mechanics with the look of actual creatures.

TAKIP vehicles, on the other hand, look like authentic 19th-Century technologies that have miscegenated with the designs of da Vinci, Verne, and Tesla. An equally fantastic idea is to create Frankenstein-like constructs by taking monster carcasses and using magic and/or primitive herbalism to stabilize the decay, combining the infrastructure of the carcass with primitive mechanics to steer and propel it.



Map by Diesel

Medieval Tesla

An important part of any roleplaying campaign should be discovery. Players should feel like they have as much to gain by solving mysteries as they do by killing monsters and opposing NPCs. Variant technologies do not have to provide overpowering weapon superiority—they merely have to intrigue the PCs and add something new to the stale campaign. Here are some things to consider when adding variant technologies to your campaign:

1. A new technology doesn't appear in a vacuum. A relatively sophisticated technology such as a monstrous mechanical juggernaut will probably be accompanied by tools and vehicles as well. Pulleys, levers, buttons, pressure

Infect Your Campaign!

Vehicles are important elements of the new expansion set to *Total Annihilation: Kingdoms*, but they lend even more wicked ideas for D&D campaigns. Here are a few intriguing variations.

***TAKIP* Submersibles: These pedal-powered ships float just below the surface, allowing for better armor against arrows and harpoons because of water resistance and providing limited camouflage. In a D&D game, the submersibles could be propeller-driven kraken carcasses, accommodating four to eight humanoids. The submersibles use an air cannon (glorified pop gun) that projects sharp seashell shards and pieces of coral as well as jury-rigged tentacles that act as trebuchets. Submersibles might use a primitive propulsion via the kraken's internal jet system, allowing bursts of speed every 4 rounds.**

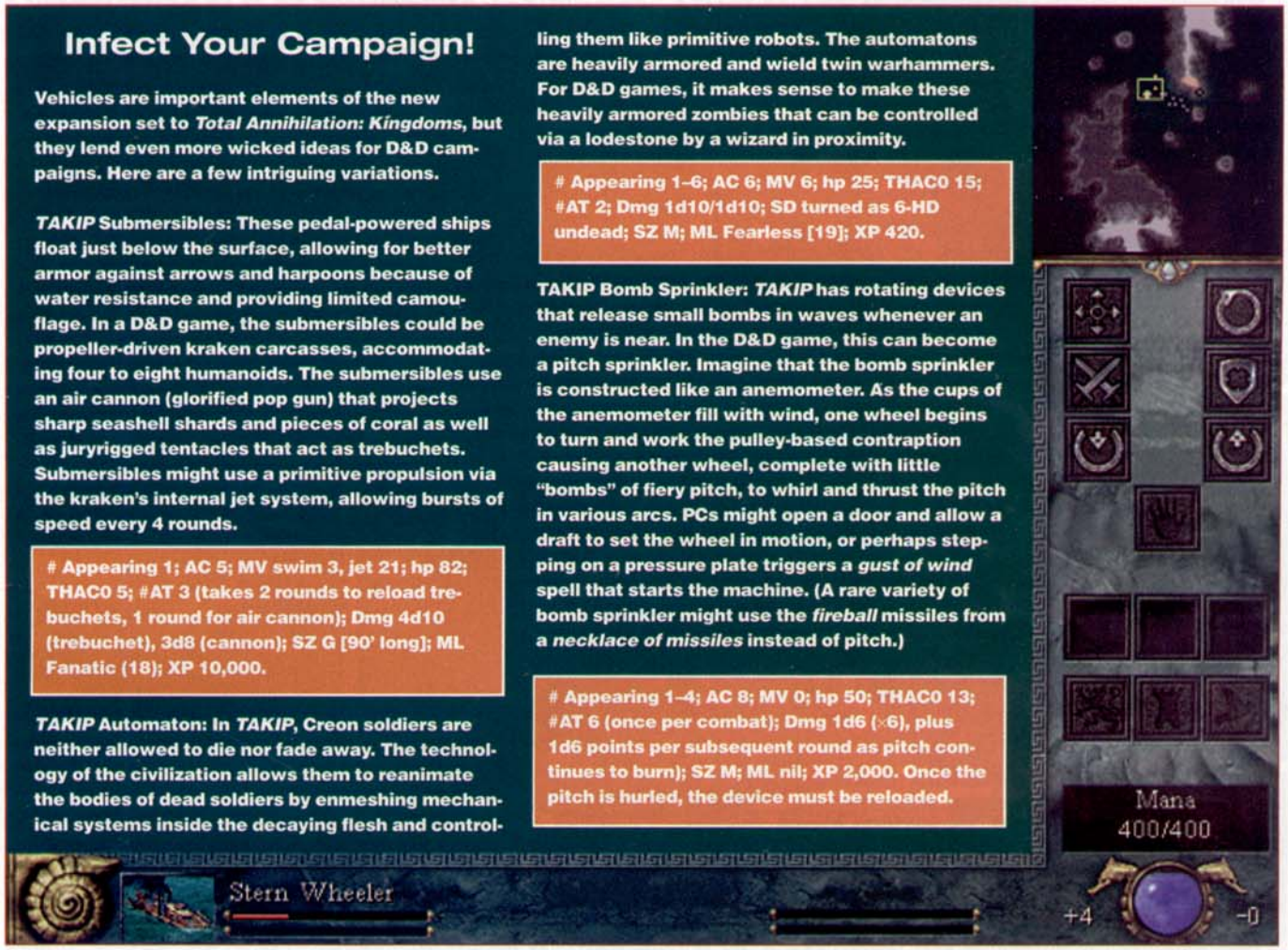
 # Appearing 1; AC 5; MV swim 3, jet 21; hp 82; THAC0 5; #AT 3 (takes 2 rounds to reload trebuchets, 1 round for air cannon); Dmg 4d10 (trebuchet), 3d8 (cannon); SZ G [90' long]; ML Fanatic (18); XP 10,000.

***TAKIP* Automaton: In *TAKIP*, Creon soldiers are neither allowed to die nor fade away. The technology of the civilization allows them to reanimate the bodies of dead soldiers by enmeshing mechanical systems inside the decaying flesh and controlling them like primitive robots. The automatons are heavily armored and wield twin warhammers. For D&D games, it makes sense to make these heavily armored zombies that can be controlled via a lodestone by a wizard in proximity.**

 # Appearing 1–6; AC 6; MV 6; hp 25; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d10/1d10; SD turned as 6-HD undead; SZ M; ML Fearless [19]; XP 420.

TAKIP Bomb Sprinkler: *TAKIP* has rotating devices that release small bombs in waves whenever an enemy is near. In the D&D game, this can become a pitch sprinkler. Imagine that the bomb sprinkler is constructed like an anemometer. As the cups of the anemometer fill with wind, one wheel begins to turn and work the pulley-based contraption causing another wheel, complete with little "bombs" of fiery pitch, to whirl and thrust the pitch in various arcs. PCs might open a door and allow a draft to set the wheel in motion, or perhaps stepping on a pressure plate triggers a *gust of wind* spell that starts the machine. (A rare variety of bomb sprinkler might use the *fireball* missiles from a *necklace of missiles* instead of pitch.)

 # Appearing 1–4; AC 8; MV 0; hp 50; THAC0 13; #AT 6 (once per combat); Dmg 1d6 (×6), plus 1d6 points per subsequent round as pitch continues to burn); SZ M; ML nil; XP 2,000. Once the pitch is hurled, the device must be reloaded.



plates, wind-driven or pedal-driven propulsion, steam power, or light refraction might appear in a society using such technology as well.

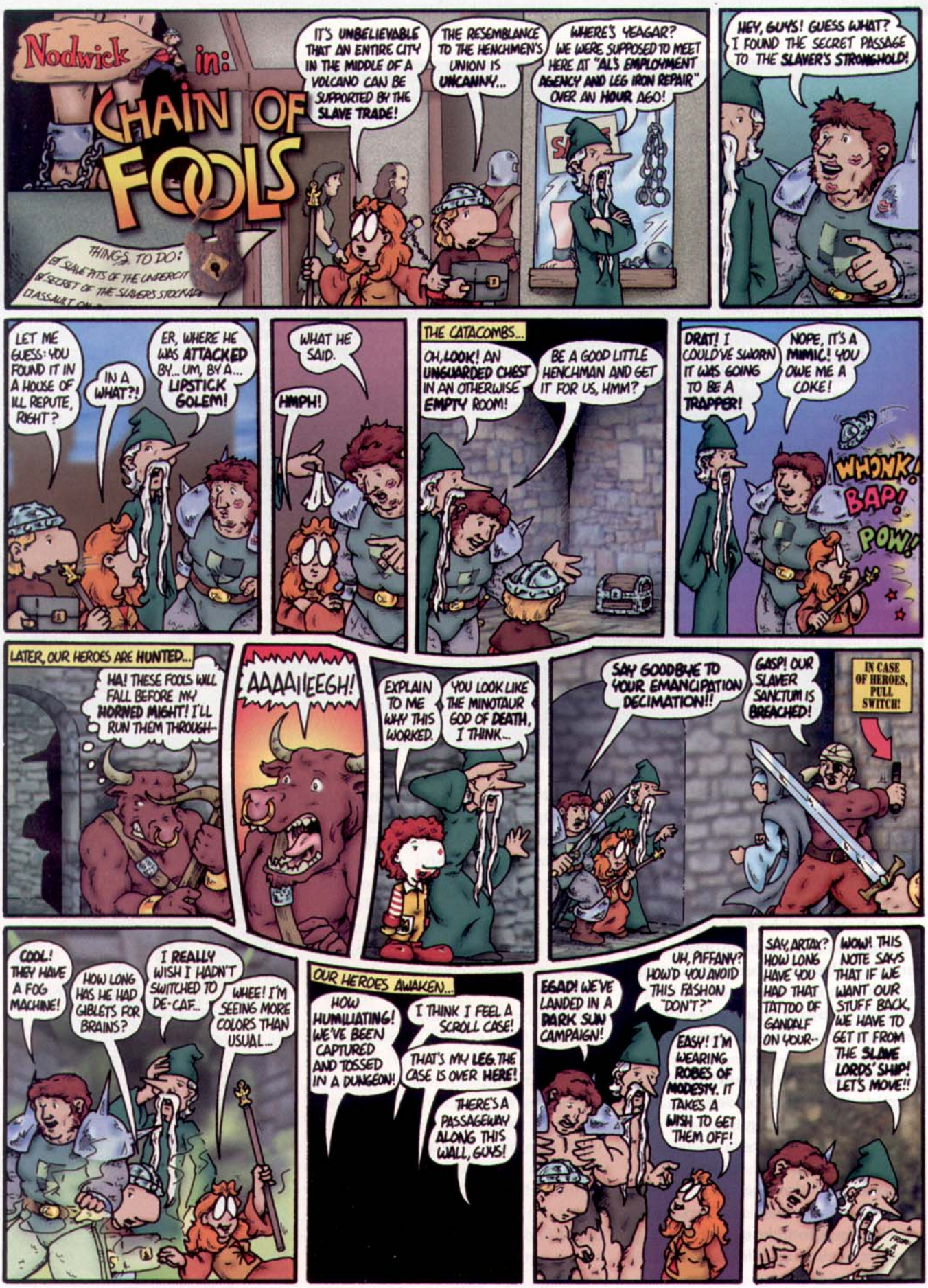
2. Technology tends to reshape attitudes, society, and culture. If a culture is transplanting mechanical devices into monster carcasses, its myth, religion, and art will probably emphasize the domination of nature. Don't expect any kind of ecological sensitivity in such a culture, and figure that plenty of waste and pollution result.

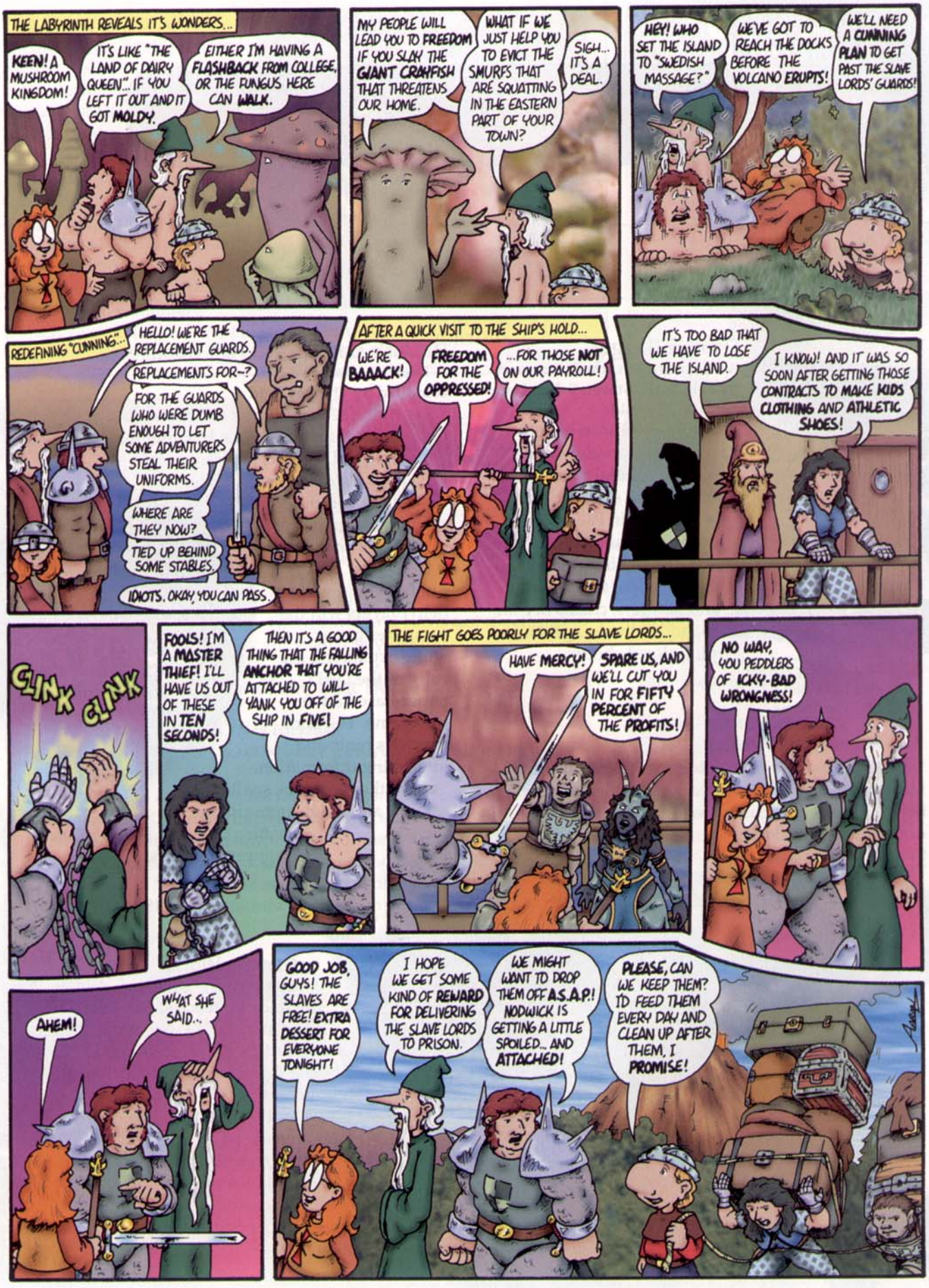
3. Technology is imitated widely but imperfectly. Even if you decide to inject an amazing technology into your campaign such as a Doomsday device, you should populate the campaign with imperfect versions that fail, moderately succeed, or create their own minor disasters. This will feed the overall campaign and provide enough information to keep the party on track.

4. Technology requires resources. If the party needs to track down a threatening technology, locate a useful one, or imitate a successful one, they'll need to perform the medieval equivalent of "follow the money." Follow the trail of the resources needed (mining for ore, harvesting timber, gutting animals, distilling chemicals, and so forth), and this will lead a party to the technology—eventually.

Follow these general guidelines and you should be able to mystify the players in your campaign with a mixture of technology, magic, and culture that will challenge them more than wave after wave of combat. Reward them by letting them have the occasional technological advantage, and they'll never look at an artifact the same again. You might find that just a bit of technology goes a long way toward revitalizing a campaign.

1. *TAKIP* Submersible
2. *TAKIP* Automaton
3. *TAKIP* Bomb Sprinkler


Nodwick in:
CHAIN OF FOOLS
THINGS TO DO:
IT'S UNBELIEVABLE THAT AN ENTIRE CITY IN THE MIDDLE OF A VOLCANO CAN BE SUPPORTED BY THE SLAVE TRADE!
THE RESEMBLANCE TO THE HENCHMEN'S UNION IS UNCANNY...
WHERE'S YEAGAR? WE WERE SUPPOSED TO MEET HERE AT "AL'S EMPLOYMENT AGENCY AND LEG IRON REPAIR" OVER AN HOUR AGO!
HEY, GUYS! GUESS WHAT? I FOUND THE SECRET PASSAGE TO THE SLAVER'S STRONGHOLD!
LET ME GUESS: YOU FOUND IT IN A HOUSE OF ILL REPUTE, RIGHT?
IN A WHAT?!
ER, WHERE HE WAS ATTACKED BY... UM, BY A... LIPSTICK GOLEM!
WHAT HE SAID.
HMPH!
THE CATACOMBS...
OH, LOOK! AN UNGUARDED CHEST IN AN OTHERWISE EMPTY ROOM!
BE A GOOD LITTLE HENCHMAN AND GET IT FOR US, HMM?
DRAT! I COULD'VE SWORN IT WAS GOING TO BE A TRAPPER!
NOPE, IT'S A MIMIC! YOU OWE ME A COKE!
WHONK!
BAP!
POW!
LATER, OUR HEROES ARE HUNTED...
HA! THESE FOOLS WILL FALL BEFORE MY HORNED MIGHT! I'LL RUN THEM THROUGH-
AAAAIEEGH!
EXPLAIN TO ME WHY THIS WORKED.
YOU LOOK LIKE THE MINOTAUR GOD OF DEATH, I THINK...
SAY GOODBYE TO YOUR EMANCIPATION DECIMATION!!
GASP! OUR SLAVER SANCTUM IS BREACHED!
IN CASE OF HEROES, PULL SWITCH!
COOL! THEY HAVE A FOG MACHINE!
HOW LONG HAS HE HAD GIBLETS FOR BRAINS?
I REALLY WISH I HADN'T SWITCHED TO DE-CAF...
WHEE! I'M SEEING MORE COLORS THAN USUAL...
OUR HEROES AWAKEN...
HOW HUMILIATING! WE'VE BEEN CAPTURED AND TOSSED IN A DUNGEON!
I THINK I FEEL A SCROLL CASE!
THAT'S MY LEG. THE CASE IS OVER HERE!
THERE'S A PASSAGEWAY ALONG THIS WALL, GUYS!
EGAD! WE'VE LANDED IN A DARK SUN CAMPAIGN!
UH, PIFFANY? HOW'D YOU AVOID THIS FASHION "DON'T?"
EASY! I'M WEARING ROBES OF MODESTY. IT TAKES A WISH TO GET THEM OFF!
SAY, ARTAX? HOW LONG HAVE YOU HAD THAT TATTOO OF GANDALF ON YOUR--
WOW! THIS NOTE SAYS THAT IF WE WANT OUR STUFF BACK, WE HAVE TO GET IT FROM THE SLAVE LORDS' SHIP! LET'S MOVE!!


THE LABYRINTH REVEALS IT'S WONDERS...
KEEN! A MUSHROOM KINGDOM!
IT'S LIKE "THE LAND OF DAIRY QUEEN"... IF YOU LEFT IT OUT AND IT GOT MOLDY.
EITHER I'M HAVING A FLASHBACK FROM COLLEGE, OR THE FUNGUS HERE CAN WALK.
MY PEOPLE WILL LEAD YOU TO FREEDOM IF YOU SLAY THE GIANT CRAYFISH THAT THREATENS OUR HOME.
WHAT IF WE JUST HELP YOU TO EVICT THE SMURFS THAT ARE SQUATTING IN THE EASTERN PART OF YOUR TOWN?
SIGH... IT'S A DEAL.
HEY! WHO SET THE ISLAND TO "SWEDISH MASSAGE?"
WE'VE GOT TO REACH THE DOCKS BEFORE THE VOLCANO ERUPTS!
WE'LL NEED A CUNNING PLAN TO GET PAST THE SLAVE LORDS' GUARDS!
REDEFINING "CUNNING"...
HELLO! WE'RE THE REPLACEMENT GUARDS.
REPLACEMENTS FOR--?
FOR THE GUARDS WHO WERE DUMB ENOUGH TO LET SOME ADVENTURERS STEAL THEIR UNIFORMS.
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
TIED UP BEHIND SOME STABLES.
IDIOTS. OKAY, YOU CAN PASS.
AFTER A QUICK VISIT TO THE SHIP'S HOLD...
WE'RE BAAACK!
FREEDOM FOR THE OPPRESSED!
...FOR THOSE NOT ON OUR PAYROLL!
IT'S TOO BAD THAT WE HAVE TO LOSE THE ISLAND.
I KNOW! AND IT WAS SO SOON AFTER GETTING THOSE CONTRACTS TO MAKE KIDS CLOTHING AND ATHLETIC SHOES!
CLINK CLINK
FOOLS! I'M A MASTER THIEF! I'LL HAVE US OUT OF THESE IN TEN SECONDS!
THEN IT'S A GOOD THING THAT THE FALLING ANCHOR THAT YOU'RE ATTACHED TO WILL YANK YOU OFF OF THE SHIP IN FIVE!
THE FIGHT GOES POORLY FOR THE SLAVE LORDS...
HAVE MERCY!
SPARE US, AND WE'LL CUT YOU IN FOR FIFTY PERCENT OF THE PROFITS!
NO WAY, YOU PEDDLERS OF ICKY-BAD WRONGNESS!
AHEM!
WHAT SHE SAID...
GOOD JOB, GUYS! THE SLAVES ARE FREE! EXTRA DESSERT FOR EVERYONE TONIGHT!
I HOPE WE GET SOME KIND OF REWARD FOR DELIVERING THE SLAVE LORDS TO PRISON.
WE MIGHT WANT TO DROP THEM OFF A.S.A.P.! NODWICK IS GETTING A LITTLE SPOILED... AND ATTACHED!
PLEASE, CAN WE KEEP THEM? I'D FEED THEM EVERY DAY AND CLEAN UP AFTER THEM, I PROMISE!

Coming Attractions

June

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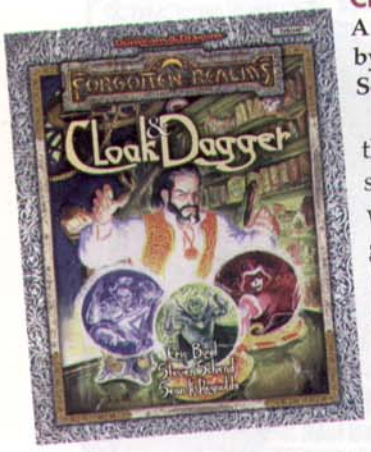
by Eric Boyd, Steven Schend, and Sean K. Reynolds



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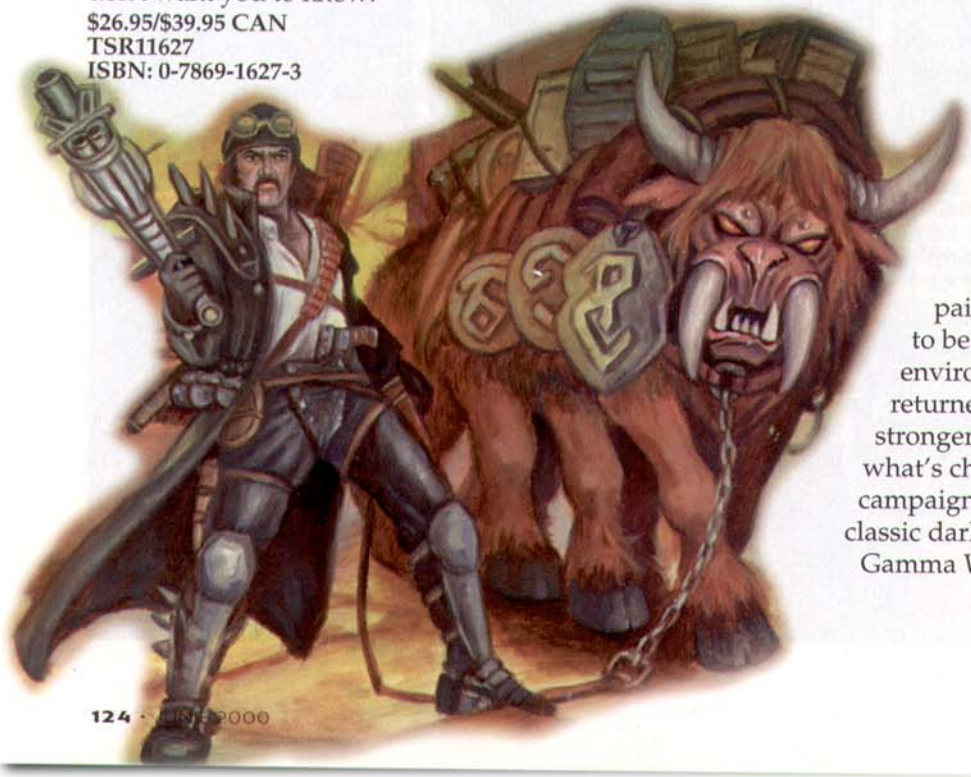

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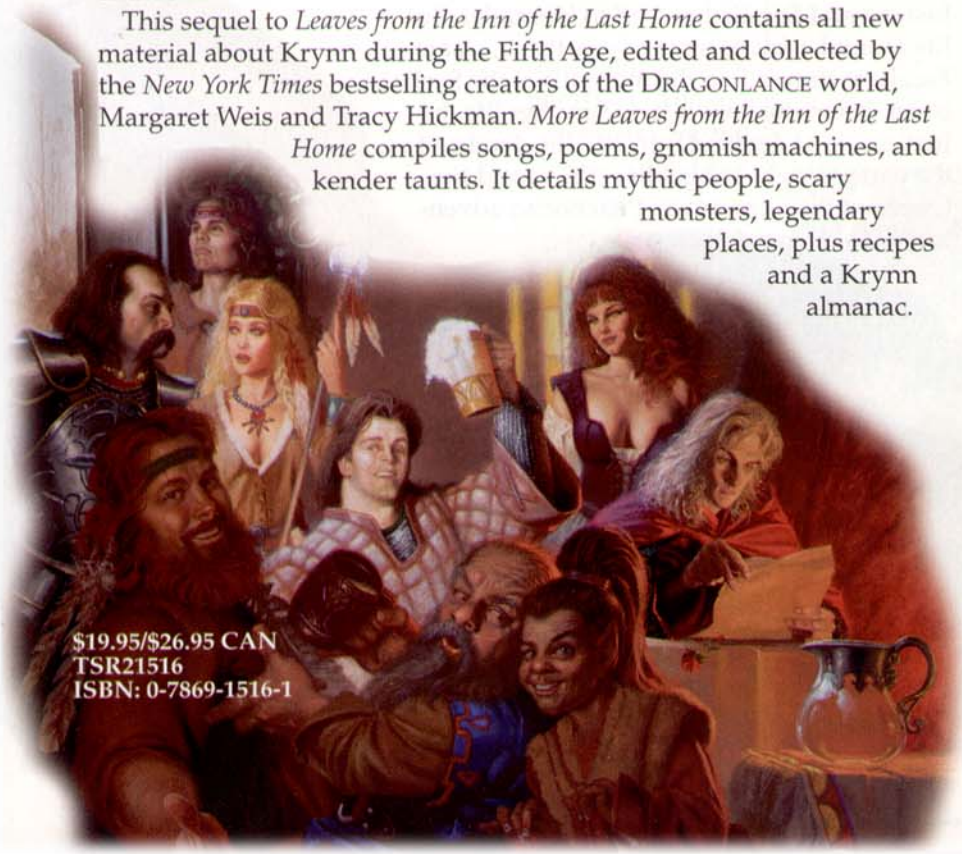

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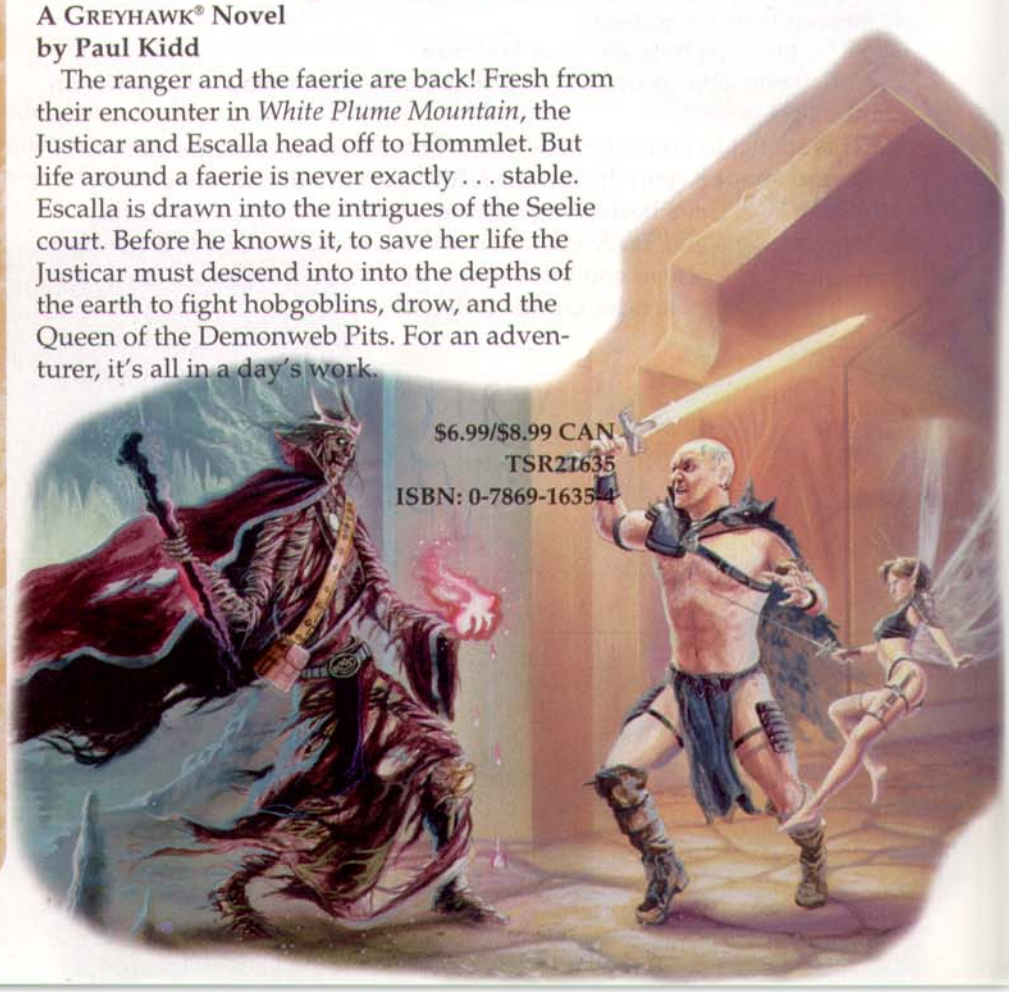
by Paul Kidd

The ranger and the faerie are back! Fresh from their encounter in *White Plume Mountain*, the Justicar and Escalla head off to Hommlet. But life around a faerie is never exactly . . . stable. Escalla is drawn into the intrigues of the Seelie court. Before he knows it, to save her life the Justicar must descend into into the depths of the earth to fight hobgoblins, drow, and the Queen of the Demonweb Pits. For an adventurer, it's all in a day's work.



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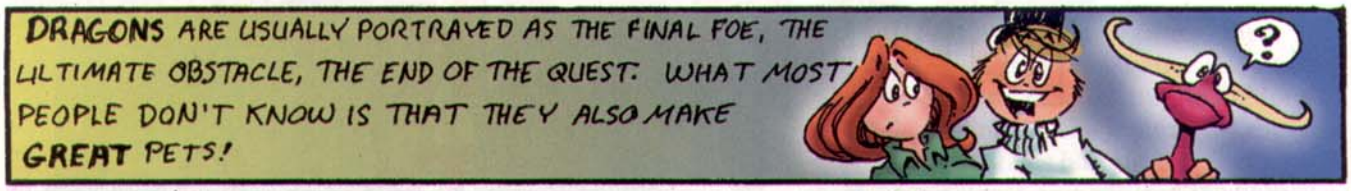
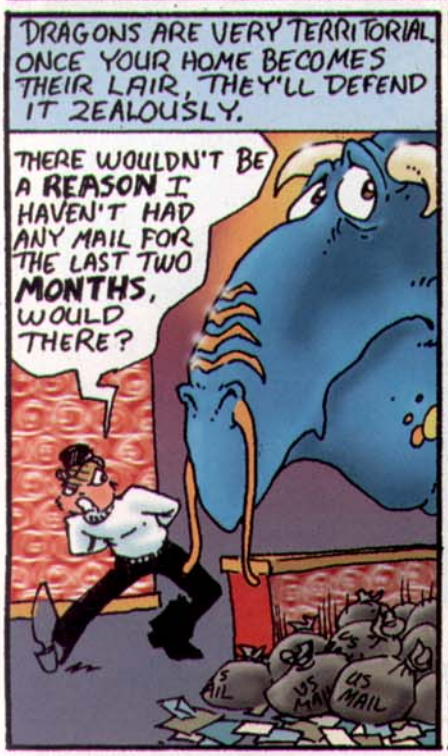
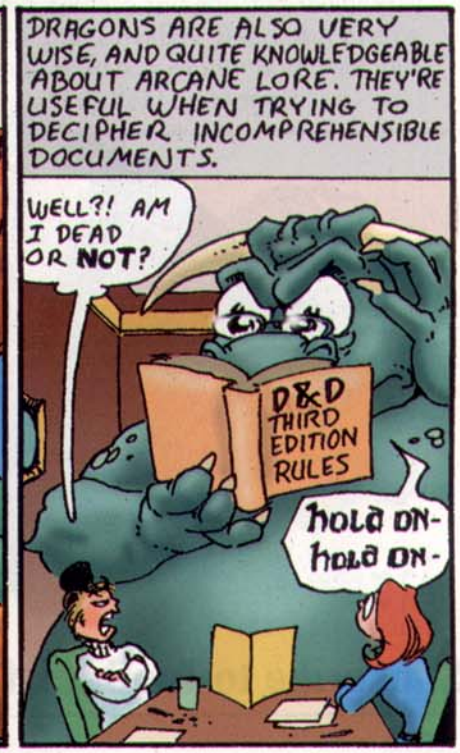
WHAT'S NEW WITH PHIL AND DIXIE


DRAGONS ARE USUALLY PORTRAYED AS THE FINAL FOE, THE ULTIMATE OBSTACLE, THE END OF THE QUEST. WHAT MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW IS THAT THEY ALSO MAKE GREAT PETS!
?


DRAGONS ARE VERY TERRITORIAL. ONCE YOUR HOME BECOMES THEIR LAIR, THEY'LL DEFEND IT ZEALOUSLY.
THERE WOULDN'T BE A REASON I HAVEN'T HAD ANY MAIL FOR THE LAST TWO MONTHS, WOULD THERE?
US MAIL

LIKE ANY OTHER PET, YOU CAN USE YOUR DRAGON TO "BREAK THE ICE" WHEN MEETING PEOPLE OF THE OPPOSITE SEX.
OZNOD! STOP THAT! SORRY, MISS. SO- COME HERE OFTEN?
SNURF SNUFF


DRAGONS ARE ALSO VERY WISE, AND QUITE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT ARCANE LORE. THEY'RE USEFUL WHEN TRYING TO DECIPHER INCOMPREHENSIBLE DOCUMENTS.
WELL?! AM I DEAD OR NOT?
D&D THIRD EDITION RULES
hold on- hold on-

DRAGONS LIKE TO FEEL USEFUL— SO GET RID OF THAT CAR! (THOUGH THERE IS A SMALL PROBLEM)
SORRY.
VEHICLE EMISSIONS TESTING AREA 9
SORRY.

YOU'LL ALSO HAVE TROUBLE WITH SOME OF THE MORE 'TRADITIONAL' PET ACTIVITIES.
NO, NO, NO! IF I THROW THE FRISBEE, YOU BRING BACK THE FRISBEE!
GOOD
©P.Foglio '00

BUT BEST OF ALL— THEY HELP WITH THE BILLS.
YOU WANT GOLD FROM MY HOARD? YOU KNOW THE PRICE, HUMAN.
A BRAND NEW RUBBER MOUSIE?
help yourself!

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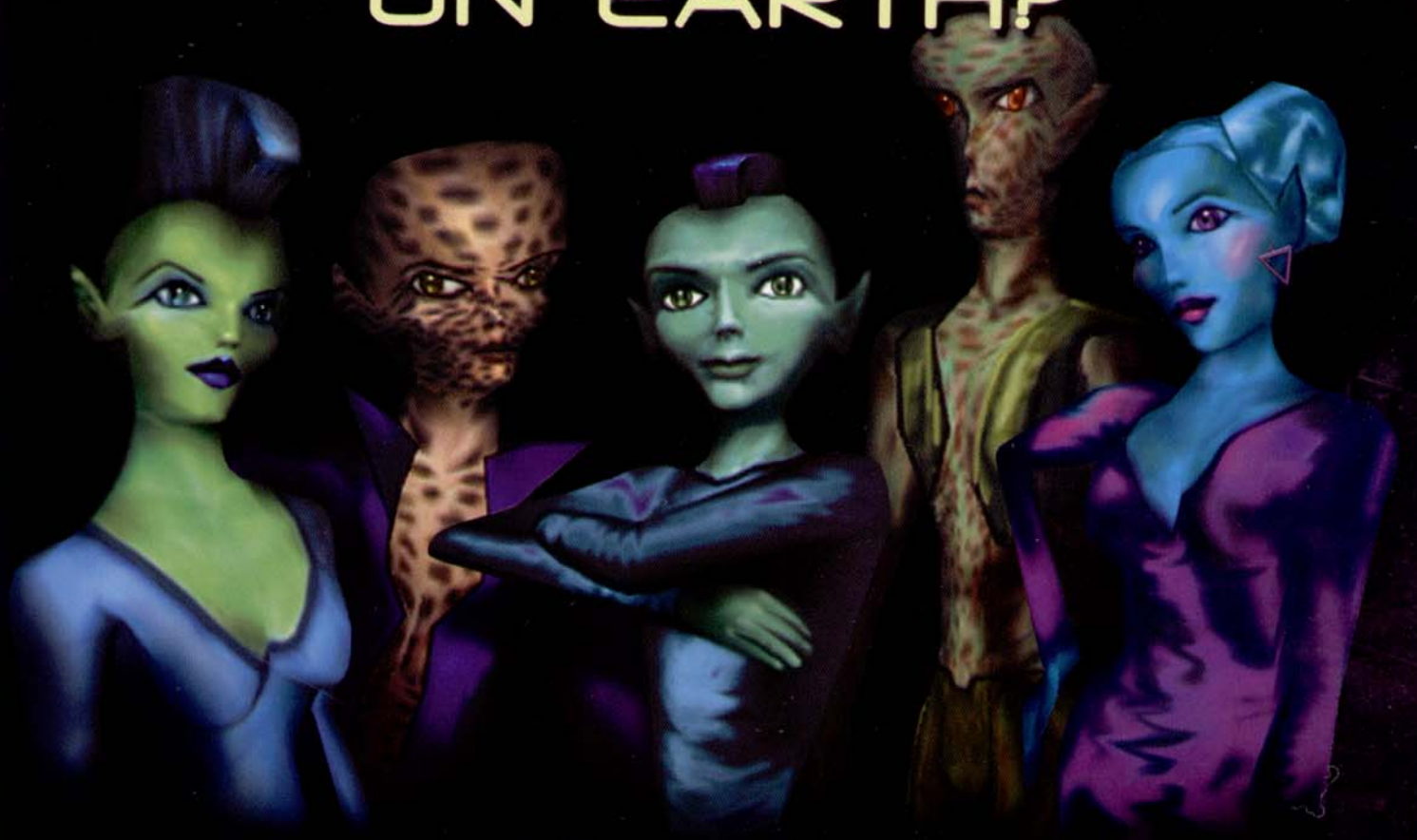
END

FEELING ALIENATED ON EARTH?



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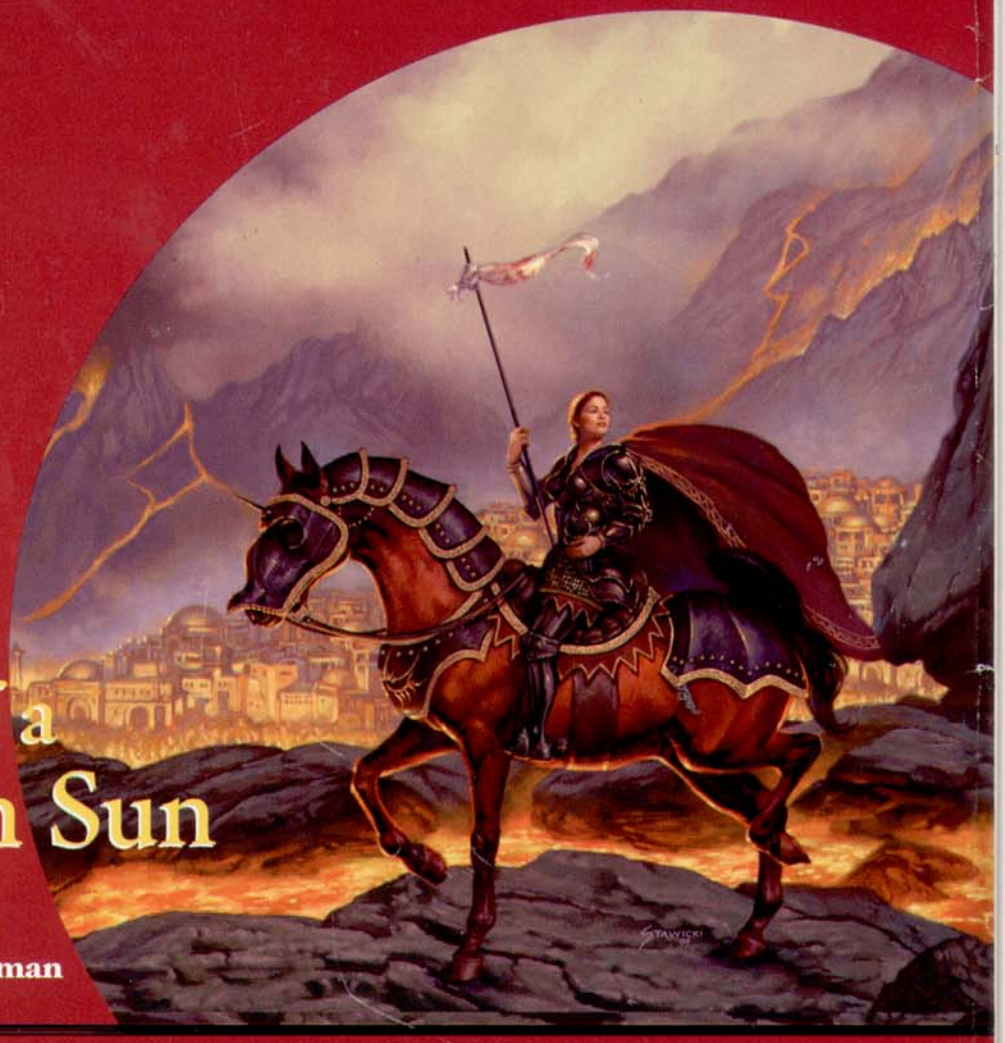

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